













# INDIAN NATIONAL SONGS AND SYMBOLS

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## Preface

India, as a Nation, is known to the outside world from her name, national (1) song, (2) anthem, (3) emblem, (4) flag, (5) flower and (6) bird. The very name India brings to the mind of a foreigner the ancient land of the Indus Valley, Vedas, the Buddha and the reign of Asoka the Great. India has been the most cultured nation in the world since the dawn of civilization. The traditions of Indian Culture are unbroken throughout her chequered history. The message of Indian Culture has permeated the world over since the days of Asoka. As the greatest democracy of the world, what is India's message to the less developed countries elsewhere? The message is : *Satyam eva Jayate* (Truth alone triumphs).

India's national symbols are the best messengers of India's ancient culture. India's best genius has found their expression in her national Song, national Anthem, national Emblem, national Flag, national Flower and national Bird. After explaining the meaning of (1) 'India, that is Bharat', (2) national Song, 'Bande Mataram', and (3) national Anthem, 'Jana Gana Mana', in *Indian National Songs and Symbols*, we have traced the deep-rooted symbolism of our national symbols, viz., (4) Lion Capital, the national Emblem, (5) Tri-colour *Chakra-Dhvaja*, the national Flag, (6) Lotus, the National Flower, and (7) Peacock, the national Bird. Their symbolism has a universal appeal and they are an eloquent testimony to the basic unity of India's cultural diversity. Indian Culture is as variegated as her National Flag, National Flower and National Bird, and at the same time as meaningful as her very name, National Song, National Anthem and National Emblem.

*Indian National Songs and Symbols*, it is hoped, will explain our culture and message to the world expressed through our national symbols in a proper manner and thus promote international amity and a better understanding of our role in the comity of nations.

The suggestion for writing a book on our National Songs and Symbols came from the late Kanai Lal Mukhopadhyay, while publishing my first books, *The Peacock*, the National Bird of

India, in 1957. He wanted to see monographs' on all our National Songs and Symbols. I was also urged by my wife Seetha to remove certain misconceptions about our National Anthem entertained by some vested interests in Kerala.

Shri Rathindra Nath Mukherji, son of Kanai Babu, who looks after the publishing concern, deserves congratulations on undertaking the publication of the present volume which, to some extent, is a tribute to his father. The credit for seeing the manuscript through the press goes to Shri S. P. Ghosh of Firma KLM Private Ltd.

## INDIA, THAT IS BHARAT

The Constitution in its very first Article (1.1) lays down that “India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States”. The correct name of the country is, therefore, Bharat, of which India is the English equivalent. The Constitutional Fathers rightly called India, Bharat.

H. V. Kamat, speaking in the Constituent Assembly on Saturday, 17th September 1949, said: “It is customary among most peoples of the world to have what is called a *Namakaran* or a naming ceremony for the new-born. India, as a Republic, is going to be born very shortly and naturally there has been a movement in the country among many sections—almost all sections—of the people that this birth of the new Republic should be accompanied by a *Namakaran* ceremony as well. There are very many suggestions put forward as to the proper name which should be given to this new baby of the Indian Republic. The prominent suggestions have been Bharat, Hindustan, Hind and Bharatbhumi or Bharatvarsha and names of that kind.

“... Now, those who argue for Bharat or Bharatvarsha or Bharatbhumi, take their stand on the fact that this is the most ancient name of this land. Historians and philologists have delved deep into this matter of the name of this country, especially the origin of this name Bharat. Some ascribe it to the son of Dushyant and Sakuntala who was also known as *Sarva-damana* or all-conqueror and who established his suzerainty and kingdom in this ancient land. After him this land came to be known as Bharat. Another school of research scholars hold that Bharat dates back to Vedic ...”<sup>1</sup>

It is our purpose in this Chapter to explain how Bharat or Bharatvarsha came to be called India by foreigners and then trace the origin of the name Bharat.

### I. INDIA

Bounded on the north by the mighty Himalayas and on the other three sides by the Arabian Sea, and Indian Ocean, India



has been a distinct geographical entity as a sub-continent. The separation of Burma and the Partition in 1947 have still left India with well-defined natural boundaries.

Vedas, world's most ancient scriptures, divided the land occupied by the Aryans into Saptasaindhava, Panchanada, Madhyadesa, and Prachi. Saptasaindhava comprised the land watered by the middle course of the Sindhu (— Indus), the Vitasta (Jhelum), and the Asikni or Chandrabhaga (Chenab), which, after their confluence, form the Marudvrida, the Urungira or Airavati (Ravi), Purushni or Vipasa (Beas) and Satadru (Sutlej) and by the Sarasvati. Panchanada is the country through which only the five great eastern tributaries of the Sindhu flow. The land between the Sarasvati and Drishadvati was called Brahmavarta. In Saptasaindhava and on the banks of the Gomati (Gomal), Krumu (Kurru), and Kubha (Kabul) were the earliest settlements of the Aryans. The movement of the migrant Aryans from the Caspian Sea region was checked by the Sindhu, which appeared to them as a vast expanse of water, even as the sea; hence they called it the Sindhu (Sanskrit —“sea”). Gradually the Aryans moved down the Indus and occupied the lands towards the east and south-east which they called Madhyadesa (Middle Country). This extended from Vinasana, where the Sarasvati disappears in the sands. Prachi (East land) comprised the land watered by the lower middle and lower Ganges and its tributaries, the Ghargara (Gogra), Gandaki (Gandak), Sona or Hiranyabaha (Son) and others.<sup>2</sup>

Persians, whose geographical knowledge during the Vedic period was limited to the borders of the Sindhu, called the country as *Hapta Hindu* in their Avesta by exchanging the initial sibilant for an aspirate. There are four references to India in the Avesta (The Vendidad, I: 19; Yacna-Sarosh Yasht. LVII: 29; Meher Yasht, 104 and Tir Yasht, 32). The reference to India in the Vendidad is the oldest and the passage reads: “Panchadasem asanghamcha shoithranamcha vahisitem frathwere-sem. azem yo Ahuro Mazdao yo Hapta-Hindu, hacha ushastara Hindva avi daoshatarem. Hindum. Aat ahe paityarem frakerentat Anglo Mainyush pouru-mahrko arathwyacha dakhshata arathwimcha garemaum” (I, who am Ahura Mazda, created, as the fifteenth best place and country, [the country of] Hapta Hindu,—[which extends] from the East of the Hindu [— river,

i.e., the Indus] upto the west of the Hindu. Then, the evil spirit created therein, as a counter-act [— against its excellence] excessive menstruation and excessive heat).

The country was known simply as “Hindu” later on (Yacna & Meher Yasht). The last reference is not actually to India but to the mountain Hindu(kush). These references leave no room for doubt that India with its Hindukush mountain was known to the Persians during the Avestan period (1200 B.C.).

The Greeks reduced the name *Hindu* to *Indos*. The Hebrews wrote it as *Hod(d)* or perhaps *Hiddu*. In the Bible (Book of Esther 1 : 1 and 8 : 9) mention is made of *Hod(d)* which is translated as India in the Authorised Version. Thus, the country traversed by the Sindhu (Indus) was known to the Persians, Hebrews and the Greeks. *Indos* of the Greeks became *Indies* in Latin and India, its equivalent, appears in the English language by about 893 A.D.

The Old English had *India* from Latin, but the Middle English form is from French *Ynde*, *Inde*, *Ind*. India was the word used in the Cotton Manuscript (c. 893). The Latin *Indie* was current in English early in the 16th century, of which the plural *Indies* is still in use for we find in the State Papers of Henry VIII (vi, 193) “bowght hithir from the Indias”. The current use of *India* appears to date from the 16th century and may partly reflect Spanish, or Portuguese usage. The division of *India* into “India minor” and “India major” dates from 1519 onwards for we read: “This quarter is India minor And this quarter India major The lande of Prester John”.<sup>3</sup>

Though India denoted originally the geographical entity beginning from Baluchistan to Burma and from Kashmir to Cape Comorin, the connotation of the term has gone on changing with the extension of Indian influence in the Oceanic Islands and Archipelago. This is not opposed to the description of Bharat or Bharatvarsha found in our epics and Puranas. Foreigners have, accordingly, described India either in its extended or restricted sense. Whatever be the connotation ascribed to India by the writers of the Puranas or foreigners, the land originally designated by the name remained undiminished till the separation of Burma and finally the Partition.

The Expedition of Alexander the Great to India (B.C. 327-324) has presented the best geographical knowledge possessed

by the Greeks. The Macedonian had scientific men with him to chronicle his achievements and describe the countries invaded by him. Though no official account has survived, the results of Alexander's expedition are incorporated by Strabo, Pliny and Arrian. Though the quotations given from Diodorus, Strabo, Arrian and Rufus bear different dates, they all mostly relate to that part of India invaded by Alexander.

Megasthenes, who lived at Pataliputra (Patna) as Ambassador of Seleucus to Chandragupta Maurya, collected a good deal of geographical and political information about India of his days. This is found in Arrian's *Indika*. The data furnished by Megasthenes belong to the early part of the 3rd century B.C. and quotations from Arrian must therefore refer to circa 300 B.C.

The Chinese contact with India probably started in the 1st century A.D. after the spread of Buddhism into that country. Chinese maritime contact with South India started much later. The Chinese also called India variously as *Ten-chu*, *Shen-tu*, and *Hien-tu* and lastly *In-tu*. The name *In-tu* means the Moon. Probably the name *In-tu* was applied by the Chinese to describe the shape of India.

Early in the 17th century Englishmen conceived India as a large country or territory of Southern Asia, lying east of the river Indus and south of the Himalaya mountains (in this restricted sense also called Hindustan); also extended to include the region further east (*Farther India*) between this and China. Purchas in his *Pilgrimage* (1614) says: "Under the name of India, here we comprehend all that Tract between the Indus on the west, unto China Eastward".

As we have a number of good accounts about India from foreign authors from the 5th century B.C. onwards, we shall give some quotations from them here before we explain the various Indies often met with in their writings.

Darius (B.C. c. 480). "Says Darius the King: By the grace of Ormazd these (are) the countries which I have acquired besides Persia. I have established my power over them. They have brought tribute to me. That which has been said to them by me they have done. They have obeyed my law. Medea...Arachotia (Harauvatish), Sattagdia (Tha-

tagush) Gandaria (Gadara), India (Hindush) . . .”—On the Tomb of Darius at Nakhsh-i-Rustam (Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, 4th vol., p. 250).<sup>4</sup>

Herodotus (B.C. c. 480). “That part of India towards the rising sun is all sand. Indeed of all the inhabitants of Asia of whom we have any reliable information, the Indians are the most easterly—beyond them the country is uninhabitable desert”—(Herodotus, Bk III. 98).<sup>5</sup>

Megasthenes (B.C. c. 300). “India then being four-sided in pean, the side which looks to the Orient and that to the south, the Great Sea compasseth; that towards the Arctic is divided by the mountain chain of Hemodus from Scythia, inhabited by that tribe of Scythians who are called Sakai; and on the fourth side, turned towards the West, the Indus marks the boundary, the biggest or nearly so of all rivers after the Nile”—Megasthenes in *Diodorus*, ii. 35.<sup>6</sup>

Virgil (B.C. 37 & 30).

Georgics (composed between 37 & 30 B.C.) I. 57. “India produces ivory”.

Georg. II, 116-17. “India alone produces black ebony”.

Georg. II. 122-24. “Why speak of . . . the forests which India bears hard by the Ocean—the utmost corner of the world—forests where no shot of the arrow can reach the sky that tops the trees, and the natives are not slow when they take up the quiver?”

Georg. II. 136-39. “But neither Median forests, wealthiest of climes, nor lovely Ganges, nor Hermus whose mud is gold, may vie with the glories of Italy. No, nor Bactra, nor India, nor Panchaia, with all the riches of its incense-bearing sands”.<sup>7</sup>

Diodorus (B.C. 21). “India, which is in shape quadrilateral, has its eastern as well as its southern side bounded by the great sea, but on the northern side it is divided by Mount Hemodus from that part of Skythia which is inhabited by those Skythians who are called the Sakai, while the fourth or western side is bounded by the river called the Indus, which is perhaps the largest of all rivers in the world after the Nile. The extent of the whole country from east to west is said to be 28,000 stadia, and from north to south

32,000"—Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 12 vols., (trans. C. H. Oldfather, 1935) Bk. II, para<sup>8</sup> 35.<sup>8</sup>

Strabo (A.D. 17). "After India one comes to Ariana, the first portion of the country subject to the Persians after the Indus River and of the Upper Satrapies situated outside the Taurus".—Strabo's *Geography*, Bk. XV, 11.<sup>9</sup>

Strabo (A.D. 17). "India is bounded on the north, from Ariana to the eastern sea, by the extremities of the Taurus, which by the natives are severally called 'Paropamisus' and 'Emodus' and 'Imaus' and other names, but by the Macedonians 'Caucasus'; on the west by the Indus River; but the southern and eastern sides, which are much greater than the other two, extend out into the Atlantic Sea, and thus the shape of the country becomes rhomboidal, each of the greater sides exceeding the opposite side by as much as three thousand stadia, which is the same number of stadia by which the Cape Common to the eastern and southern coast extends equally farther out in either direction than the rest of the shore"—*Geography of Strabo*, Bk. XV, I, para 11.<sup>10</sup>

Rufus (A.D. 41-45). "India lies almost entirely towards the east, and it is of less extent in breadth than in length. The southern parts rise in hills of considerable elevation... The Ganges, which is the greatest of all rivers in the east, flows down to the south country..."—Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander the Great*, Bk. viii, ch. 9.<sup>11</sup>

Periplus (A.D. 73-77). "India has everywhere a great abundance of rivers, and her seas ebb and flow with tides of extraordinary strength, which increase with the moon both when new and when full, and for three days after each, but fall off in the intermediate space"—*Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, Trans. McCrindle, para 45.<sup>12</sup>

Pliny (A.D. 77). "Where the chain of Hemodus rises the communities are settled, and the nations of India, which begin there, adjoin not only the eastern sea but also the southern Ocean. That part which faces the east runs in a straight line to the bend where the Indian Ocean begins, and measures 1875 miles. Then from this bend to the south upto the river Indus, which forms the western boundary of India, the distance as given by Eratosthenes is 2475

miles. But many authors have represented the total length of its coast as being a sail of forty days and forty nights, and its length from north to south as being 2850 miles".—

Pliny, the Elder, *Natural History*, Bk. VI, c. 21.<sup>13</sup>

Arrian (A.D. 145). "Now the countries which lie to the east of the Indus I take to be India Proper, and the people who inhabit them to be Indians. The northern boundaries of India *so defined* are formed by Mount Taurus, though the range does not retain that name in these parts... On the west the boundaries of India are marked by the river Indus all the way to the great ocean into which it pours its waters, which it does by two mouths... On the south-west, and on the south, India is bounded by the great ocean just mentioned, which also forms its boundary on the east... The mightiest are the Ganges and the Indus, from which the country receives its name"—Arrian's *Indika*.<sup>14</sup>

Ptolemy (160 A.D.). "India within the river Ganges is bounded on the west by the Paropanisadai and Arakhosia and Gedrosia along their eastern sides already indicated, on the north by Mount Imaos along the Sogdiaioi and the Sakai lying above it, on the west by the river Ganges; and on the south and again on the west by a portion of the Indian Ocean"—Ptolemy's *Treatise on Geography*, Bk. VII, Chap. I. 1.<sup>15</sup>

Dionysios (3rd cent. A.D.). "Attend to me now while I tell thee of the shape of India, and of its rivers and high-soaring mountains, and of the races of men who possess it. It has four sides which make oblique angles at their joints of junction, so that it thus somewhat resembles a rhombus in shape. On the west its frontier is determined by the waters of the Indus, on the south by the billows of the Erythrean Sea, on the east by the Ganges, and in the quarter of the polar Bears by the Caucasus".—Dionysios Periegetes's *Description of the Whole World*, lines 1080-1165.<sup>16</sup>

Totius (A.D. 350). "Next comes *India Major*, from which silk and all kinds of necessities are said to be exported. Its people live like their next neighbours and spend their years agreeably, inhabiting a country of great extent and fertility, which it takes 210 days to traverse.

"Beyond and adjoining these is a country which is said to be inhabited by men remarkably industrious—good at fighting and at work of every kind. *India Minor* accordingly seek their aid as often as war is waged upon by the Persians. They are abundantly supplied with everything, and the country they inhabit take 150 days to traverse.

"Beyond these lie the inhabitants of *India Minor*, who are governed from *India Major*. They have elephants without number, which they dispose of to the Persians. Their country is traversed in fifteen days".—*Totius orbis Descriptio*—A Latin translation of a lost Greek original composed either at Antioch or Alexandria between 350 and 353 A.D.—sections 16-18.<sup>17</sup>

Itsakrhi (c. 590 A.D.). "As for the land of the Hind it is bounded on the East by the Persian Sea (i.e., the Indian Ocean), on the W. and S. by the countries of Islam, and on the N. by the Chinese Empire... The length of the land of the Hind from the government of Mokran, the country of Mansura and Bodha and the rest of Sind, till thou comest to Kanauj and thence passest on to Tobbat is about 4 months, and its breadth from the Indian Ocean to the country of Kanauj about three months".—Itsakrhi, pp. 6 & 11.<sup>18</sup>

### *Various Indias*

Ptolemy, whom we have already quoted, had divided India into two parts, viz., (1) "India within the Ganges", and (2) "India Beyond the Ganges". This Egyptian geographer's two-fold division of India was followed by subsequent writers, adding sometime a third one. Thus, Marco Polo (1298) divided the sub-continent into (1) "India the Greater", (2) "India the Lesser", and (3) "India the Middle". This Venetian traveller comprehended the whole of Hindustan proper and the Peninsula as far westward as the province of Makran or the country extending from the Ganges to the Indus within the first division, for he wrote: "*India the Greater* is that which extends from Maabar to Kesmacoran (i.e., from Coromandel to Makran) and it contains 13 great kingdoms". The "India the Lesser" of Marco Polo included the space between the eastern coast of the Peninsula of India and that of Cochin China, besides the Oceanic

islands like Java, Sumatra, etc., for he says: "*India the Lesser* extends from the Province of Champa to Mutfli (i.e., from Cochin China to the Krishna Delta) and contains 8 great kingdoms".<sup>19</sup> The "India the Middle" of Polo was Abyssinia, for he says: "Abascia is an extensive country, termed the Middle or Second India".<sup>20</sup>

Friar Jordanus (c. 1328) follows Marco Polo and divides India into "Greater" and the "Less". He says: "What shall I say? The greatness of this *India* is beyond description. But let this much suffice concerning *India the Greater* and the *Less*. Of *India Tertia* I will say this, that I have not indeed seen its many marvels, not having been there".<sup>21</sup>

Ruy Gonzalez (1404) also followed this two-fold division: "And this same Thursday that the said Ambassadors arrived at this great River (the Oxus) they crossed to the other side. And the same day...came in the evening to a great city which is called Tenmit (Termedh), and this used to belong to *India Minor*, but now belongs to the empire of Samarkand, having been conquered by Tamurbec".<sup>22</sup>

Tavernier (1642) does not follow the description of his predecessors. "Though the Indies stretch themselves from Persia for the space of above 400 leagues together, from the ocean to that long chain of mountains that runs through the middle of Asia from the east to the west, and which was known to antiquity by the name of Mount Caucasus, or Mount Taurus...". The Mogul Empire contained "the greatest part of Indostan" and extends from the mountains on this side the river Indus, to the mountains on the other side of the Ganges; borders eastward upon the kingdom of Aracan, Tipra, and Asia" (Assam).<sup>23</sup> Bernier (1656-1668) has described the empire of the Great Mogul "known commonly by the name of the Indies, or Hindoustan".<sup>24</sup>

Thevenot (1666) has followed Ptolemy's division of India. Ptolemy's division of India into "India within the Ganges" (*India Intra Gangem*) and "India Beyond the Ganges" (*India Extra Gangem*) was followed by writers till the end of the 18th century. Eden has included in his *Decade of Voyages* "The Navigation and Voyages of Lewes Vertomanus...to the regions of Arabia...East India, both within and without the Ganges". Peter Heyleyn, in his *Cosmographie, in Four Books, containing*



*the Chronographie and Historie of the Whole World, and all the principall Kingdomes, Provinces, Seas, and Isles, thereof* (London, 1652) says :

"*India Intra Gangem*, is bounded on the East, with the river Ganges till the fall thereof into the Sea, and after that with that large and spacious Bay, called antiently *Sinus Gangeticus*, now the Gulf of Bengala: on the West, with *Paropamisus*, *Arachosia*, *Gedrosia*, Provinces of the *Persian* Empire; and part of the *Arabian* Seas: on the North, where it is broadest, with Mount *Taurus*, branched into *Paropamisus*, *Caucasus* and other parts: and on the South, where it endeth in a sharp point or Promontory, by Ptolemy called *Communia Extrema*, but now *Cape Commari*, with the Indian Ocean, so named from being situate on this side of Ganges, by the moderns, *Industan*".

Heyleyn wrote in 1668: "*India Extra Gangem* is that part of the great *Continent* of *India*, which lieth on the farther side of the River *Ganges*, from the spring or fountain of it, wheresoever it be, to the fall thereof into the sea by the fifth and last mouth thereof, which is called *Antibolli*. The other four being reckoned into the other part of *India*, in the side of that River. From hence extended Eastward as far as *China* and the *Oriental* Ocean, in other parts bounded as before" (*Cosmographie*, Bk. III, p. 211).

Baldaeus followed the same pattern for he says: "*India* was anciently divided into two parts by the river *Ganges*; thence the more eastern part was called *India* beyond the Ganges, and the western part *India* on this side of the Ganges, now known by the name of *Indostan*".

There is unmistakable evidence in a *Gazetteer of the World* published in or about 1795 that its English author still followed Ptolemy. The description of India given in that work is worth quoting.<sup>25</sup> India is "bounded on the North, by the countries of Usbec Tartary and Thibet; on the South, by the Indian Ocean: on the East, by China and the Chinese Sea; and on the West, by Persia and the Indian Sea". The author has divided India into three great parts, "first, the Peninsula of India beyond the Ganges, called the Farther Peninsula; secondly, the mainland, or the Mogul's empire; thirdly, the Peninsula within or on this side the Ganges".<sup>26</sup> The "Peninsula of India beyond the Ganges, called the Farther India" (length 2000 miles, breadth 1000

miles—741,500 sq. miles) “is bounded by Thibet and China, on the North; by China and the Chinese Sea, on the East; by the same and the straits of Malacca, on the South; and by the Bay of Bengal and the Hither India, on the West. The space between Bengal and China is now called the province of Mock-lus, and other districts, subject to the king of Ava or Burmah”.<sup>27</sup> Acham, Ava, Arracan, Pegu, Martaban, Siam, Malacca, Tonquin, Laos, Cochin China, Cambodia, and Champa are included within this “India beyond the Ganges”. The “India within the Ganges, or the Empire of the Great Mogul” (length 2000 miles; breadth 1500 miles—870,910 sq. miles) is “bounded by Usbec Tartary and Thibet on the North; by Thibet and the Bay of Bengal, on the East; by the Indian Ocean, on the South; by the same and Persia, on the West. The main land being the Mogul empire, or Indostan, properly so called”.<sup>28</sup> The third division, the “Peninsula within the Ganges” was made up of all the coastal districts of India from the Coromandel to “South-west coast of India, usually called the coast of Malabar” running from “Cape Comorin to Cambaya, or Guzerat”.<sup>29</sup> Our author has described Amboyna, Banda, Macasar, Sunda, Borneo, Sumatra, Java, Ceylon, Maldives etc. in his “Indian Islands”.<sup>30</sup>

There was no conception of “Asia” as such during the ‘dark ages’, the known world being divided into Europe, Africa and India. The division of India into (1) “India Major” and “India Minor” can be traced to the 4th century A.D. if not earlier. “It is this conception of a twofold or threefold India that has given us and the other nations of Europe the vernacular expressions in plural form which hold their ground to this day: the *Indies*, *les Indes*, *le Indies* &c.,” say Yule and Burnell.<sup>31</sup>

A Charter was given by Queen Elizabeth I on 31st December 1600 to “The Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies”. Next year Shakespeare (1601) wrote: “He does smile his face into more lines than are in the new map, with the augmentation of the Indies”. In 1612 the great dramatist wrote: “Our King has all the Indies in his arms”.<sup>32</sup> Fernand Mendez Pinto “was thirteen times captive and seventeen times sold in the Indies”.<sup>33</sup>

European nations which had possessions in the East called them by the name of India, even if they were simply trading

lodges (or factories) anywhere on the coast of India or in the Oceanic islands. Portuguese India in the beginning was the coast of Malabar, and the rest of the country, Asia. From the 17th century it was confined to Goa, Daman and Diu, till the other day, but the Viceroy was "The Governor-General of India". The Dutch called Java their India and to the Spaniards, Manilla was India. French India consisted of Pondicherry and Chandernagore. Even the Board of Directors of the East India Company used the word India in a restricted sense as late as 1670. The Company's servants in India always used the name in its present sense. Edward Dodsworth does so in his letter dated 5th November, 1615: "At our arrival at Surratt we found small store of goods provided for our ships; therefore we concluded to send up into divers places of India to buy goods for England and other parts of the Indies".<sup>34</sup>

Marco Polo's application of "India the Middle" to Abyssinia was the legacy of a misconception inherited from the Biblical times, for the Book of Esther begins with this sentence: "Now it came to pass in the days of A-has-u-e-rus, (this is A-has-u-e-rus which reigned from India even into E-thi-o-pi-a, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces) . . .".

The Chinese pilgrims—Fa-Hian, Hiuen-tsang, and I-tsing—had some vague notion of India, but they preferred to divide the country into five Indies—North, Central, East, South and West (probably after the writers of the Puranas). They knew India was bounded on the north by the snowy mountains and by the sea on the other three sides. Broad in its northern part and narrow in the south, India's shape was that of a half-moon, and had a circuit of 90,000 *li*, or 18,000 miles. Hiuen-tsang wrote: "The circumference of Five Indies is about 90,000 *li*, on three sides it is bounded by a great sea; on the north it is backed by snowy mountains. It is wide at the north and narrow at the south; its figure is that of a half-moon".<sup>35</sup>

Before we conclude this part of this Chapter and proceed to explain the meaning of Bharat, we should explain how India went to the West. Columbus, under the patronage of Queen Isabella of Spain, set sail in 1492 for discovering India by a bold and unknown route. After 33 days' sail he sighted land early in the morning of 12th October. He landed on San Salvador. This was not the India Columbus was in quest of. The

countries which he had discovered were considered as a part of India. Even after the error which gave rise to this opinion was detected, and the true position of the New World was ascertained, the name remained and the appellation of West Indies was given by all the people of Europe to the country, and that of Indians to its inhabitants. Thus were the West Indies discovered by seeking a passage to the East and even after the discovery, still conceived to be part of the Eastern hemisphere. Englishmen called America or some other parts of it by the name "New India", for we have a title of "A treatyse of new India, with other new founde landes and Ilandes...after description of Sebastian Munster" (1553).

## II. BHARAT

The most ancient name of India was Jambudvipa.<sup>36</sup> Jambudvipa was named after a mythical Jambu (Jambula—*Eugenia jambolana*, Lam.) tree, the branches of which extended over 100 yojanas.<sup>37</sup> This great land-mass looked like a lotus with Meru as its *karnika* (pericarp) and the Varshas of Bharata, Bhadrasha, Ketumala and Uttarakuru as its four petals.<sup>38-39</sup>

The writers of the Puranas divided the terrestrial globe into seven continents, *i.e.*, Jambudvipa, Sakadvipa, Plakshadvipa, Salmalidvipa, Kusadvipa, Kraunchadvipa, and Pushkaradvipa. Jambudvipa extended over 100,000 yojanas.<sup>40</sup> Buddhist writers also confined its geographical limits to pre-Partition India. Ganga, Yamuna, Sarabhu, and Achiravati<sup>41</sup> after washing the Jambudvipa fell into the seas. The Buddha in his Chakkavatti Sihanada Suttanta predicted: "Jambudvipa will be mighty and prosperous, the villages, towns, and royal cities will be so close that a cock would fly from each one to the next". There were pleasant parks, groves, grounds and lakes in Jambudvipa. The people of Jambudvipa led a virtuous life.<sup>42</sup>

The name of India during the days of Asoka the Great (c. 272-232 B.C.) was Jambudvipa. His Minor Rock Edict I at Maski has stated that in Jambudvipa "the gods, who were formerly unmingled with men, have now become mingled with them". His empire touched the borders of Cholas, Pandyas, and Keralaputras. As Asoka's dominions extended from Kandahar to Kanchi, Jambudvipa must have been the name of India dur-

ing his days, as there was no need for him to mention a mythical island in his inscription.

When India's cultural influence extended to the Indian Archipelago and the islands in the Indian Ocean, the writers of Puranas conceived of Jambudvipa consisting of Bhadrasva, Bharata, Ketumala and Uttarakuru. They divided Bharata or Bharatvarsha into nine *Khandas* or divisions, each separated from one another by the sea and mutually inaccessible by land routes. These islands were called (1) Indradvipa (Sumatra), (2) Kaserumat (Malay Peninsula), (3) Tamraparni (Ceylon), (4) Gabhastimat (Sumatra), (5) Nagadvipa (Nicobar and Andaman Islands), (6) Saumyadvipa (Sumba Islands), (7) Gandharadvipa (modern Kedah in the west coast of Malay Peninsula), and (8) Varunadvipa (Borneo).<sup>13</sup> The ninth island, that is Bharata, was unnamed by most of the Puranas, but some called it Manadvipa, while others designated it Kumaridvipa.<sup>44</sup>

The name Kumaridvipa or Kumari Khanda was applied to the mainland of India when Bharatvarsha was given an extended meaning to include the other eight islands in the Indian Ocean within it. Kumari (Cape Comorin), is the southern extremity of the mainland. At least one Purana<sup>45</sup> has given the story of Kumari (virgin) after whom this island or Khanda was named. The writers of the Puranas must have given the name Kumaridvipa to India when the Gupta Empire was at its zenith. However, the conquest of the islands in the Indian Ocean was not permanent. Puranas ceased to be composed after the 7th or 8th century and the connotation of Bharatvarsha was restricted to mainland India by the 9th century A.D. Foreign travellers have followed the Puranas in describing India.

Though the name Kumaridvipa did not stick to India ere long, its induction has left its vestige in the *Sankalpamantra* recited by people when any religious rite is performed. "Hari Om tatsadasya Srimadbhagavato mahapurushasya Vishnorajanya pravartamanasya sri brahmano aho dvitiya praharardhe sri svetavaraha kalpe vaivasvata manvantare ashtavimsatitame kaliyuge kali prathamacharane *Jambudvipe Bharatakhande Bharatavarshhe Kumarikhande* aryavartyaikadese avimukta varanasi kshetre anandavane bhagirathyah paschime tire vikramasake bouddhavatare amukanamni samvatsare amukamase amukapakshe amukatithou amukavasare amukasarmaham mamopattadhuritak-

shayadvara sri paramesvara prityarprityardham pratah sandhyo-  
pasanam karishye".<sup>46</sup> The phrase *Kumari khande* is clearly an  
interpolation as it makes no sense by its juxtaposition with  
*Bharatakhande Bharatavarshe*.

Most of the Puranas have given the description of Bharat-  
varsha having ocean as its boundary on the east, south and west  
and the Himalayas on the north. The inclusion of Kerala<sup>47</sup> in  
the Purana cosmography makes it clear that Bharatvarsha ex-  
tended from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. There has been  
little change in the geographical boundaries of India since the  
exeunt of the Purana-writers from the scene.

Apart from Puranic testimony, we have epigraphic evidence  
to confirm that India was once upon a time called Bharatvarsha.  
The Hathikumbha inscription of Kharavela (2nd century B.C.)  
gives the name of the country as Bharatvaisha.<sup>48</sup> Rajasekhara's  
*Kavyanimansa*<sup>49</sup> says: "Tatredam bharatam varsham". Though  
Panini, who lived in the 5th century B.C. has mentioned Kam-  
boja (Pamir region), Kalinga (Orissa) and Suramasa (Surma  
Valley in Assam) and other ancient regions, he does not desig-  
nate India by the name Bharatvarsha.<sup>50</sup> He describes Bharata  
as a Janapada and divided it into Prachya and Udichya. We  
must, therefore, conclude that the name Bharatvarsha to desig-  
nate India from Afghanistan to Burma and from Himalayas to  
Cape Comorin must have come into vogue after Asoka the  
Great.

*Mountains, Rivers & Janapadas*: Most of the Puranas (12  
out of 18) follow a set pattern in giving the geography of Bha-  
ratvarsha. They agree that there are seven Kulaparvatas (moun-  
tain chains) in Bharatvarsha, viz., Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya,  
Saktiman, Rikshavan, Vindhya and Pariyatra. In addition to  
these, there are thousands of mountains which are the source  
of several rivers.

The list of rivers given in the Puranas is long.<sup>51</sup> Ganga,  
Sindhu, Sarasvati, Godavari, Narmada and Bahuda are called  
great rivers. Satadru, Chandabhaga and Yamuna are also great  
rivers. Ganga, Sindhu, Sarasvati, Satadru, Airavati, Vitasta,  
Visala, Devika, Kuhu, Gomati, Dhautapada, Bahuda, Drisadvati,  
Kausiki, Tritiya, Nisachala, Gandhak, Ikshu, and Lohita rise  
from the Himalayas. Vedasmriti, Vetravati, Vritragna, Parnasa,

Narmada, Kaveri, Para, Dhanvatirupa, Vidusa, Vënumati, Sipra, Avanti and Kunti originate from Pariyatra.

The rivers Sona, Nandana, Sukrisa, Kshama, Mandakini, Dasuna, Chitrakuta, Tamasa, Pippali, Syeni, Chitrotpala, Vimala, Chanchala, Dhulavahini, Suktimati, Simi, Lajja, Mukuta and Hradika originate from the mountain Rikshavan.

Vindhya is the source of the Tapi, Payoshni, Nirvindhya, Kshipra, Rishabha, Vena, Visvamala, Kumudvati, Toya, Mahagauri, Durgama and Siva.

Sahya is the source of the rivers Godavari, Bhimarathi, Krishnaveni, Vanjula, Tungabhadra, Suprayaga, Vahya, and Kaveri. These are the rivers of Dakshinapatha.

From the Malaya mountain rise Kritamala, Tamraparni, Pushpaja, Utpalavati; and from Mahendra, Tribhaga, Rishikulya, Ikshuda, Tridivachala, Muli, Sarava and Vimala.

Saktiman is the source of the rivers Kasika, Sukumari, Mandaga, Mandavahini, Kripa and Pasini. They have hundreds and thousands of tributaries and distributaries.

The writers of the Puranas divided Bharatvarsha into seven divisions: Madhyadesa (Middle Country), Udichya (Northern Country), Prachya (Eastern India), Dakshinapatha (Deccan), Aparanta (Western India), Vindhya and Parvatasraya (Highlands), which in turn are inhabited by several Janapadas.<sup>52</sup> Kuru, Panchala, Salva, Jangala, Sura, Sena, Bhadrakara, Vahya, Patacchara, Matsya, Kirata, Kulya, Kuntala, Kasi, Kusala, Avanta, Kalinga, Muka and Andhaka lived in the Madhya Desa.

Balhika, Vatadhana, Abhira, Kalatoyada, Purandhra, Sudra, Pallava, Attakhandinka, Gandhara, Yavana, Sindhu-sauvira, Madra, Saka, Drahyā, Pulinda, Parada, Haramurtika, Ramatha, Kantakara, Kaikeya, Dasanaka, Attri, Bharadvaja, Prasasthala, Daseraka, Lampaka, Talagana, Saikha and Jangala are the Janapadas in Udichya.

Anga, Vanga, Maguraka, Antargiri, Bahirgiri, Plavanga, Matanga, Yamaka, Mallavarnaka, Suhmittar, Pravijaya, Marga, Vageya, Malava, Pragjyotisa, Pundra, Videha, Tamralipta, Salva, Magadha, and Gonarda are the Janapadas in Prachya.

Pandya, Kerala, Chola, Kulya, Setuka, Sutika, Vaivasika, Kupatha, Maharashtra, Mahishaka, Kalinga, Karusa, Sohaisika, Atavya, Sobara, Pulinda, Vindhya, Pusika, Vaidarbha, Dandaka, Kuliya, Sirala, Rupasa, Tupasa, Tattirika, Karaskara, Vasikya,

Antarnarmada, Bharukaccha, Sarasvataga, Maheya, Kacchika, Saurashtra, Antara and Arbuda are the Janapadas in Dakshinapatha and Aparanta.

Karusa, Mekala, Utkala, Aundra, Dasarna, Bhoja, Kishkindhaka, Tosala, Kosala, Traipura, Vaidisa, Saundikera, Tumura, Tumbara, Padmaga, Nusadha, Arupa, Vitihotra and Avani inhabit the Vindhya division.

Nihara, Sarvaga, Kuravatha, Aptha, Pravavarana, Urna, Dargha, Sakundaka, Chitramarga, Kirata, and Chamara are Parvatarayasya (highlanders).

### *Importance of Bharatvarsha*

Bharatvarsha, according to the writers of the Puranas, is a *Karmabhumi* (land of religious action) and a person got his birth here after thousands of births. The land is *Karmabhumi* because it is here that people secure heaven and final liberation. "Unlike other countries of the world, India alone offers the means to overcome one's destiny by performing certain acts (*karman*) and by taking advantage of the aids the Lord Himself has given him", says *Padma Samhita*.<sup>53</sup> This is the only Varsha where the *Yuga* system was in vogue. The *Yugas* Krita, Treta and Dwapara existed in Bharatvarsha and Kali is now on. The Krita *Yuga* was followed by the Treta and the Dwapara. The life span of man differed from the *Yuga* to *Yuga*.<sup>54</sup> The life-span in Bharatvarsha is of hundred years, say the Puranas.

Puranas have sung the glory of Bharatvarsha in the most eloquent terms. Even the gods of the heavens are eager to live in Bharatvarsha.<sup>55</sup> The reason for this was that Bharata was a *Punyabhumi* (holy land). "This Bharatvarsha is a holy (land) and makes one holy; unless one visits the whole of this land, he does not become wise".<sup>56</sup> Not only for Brahmins and Kshatriyas, but for all other human beings also Bharata is the land recommended to live in.<sup>57</sup>

Bhagavata Purana or Srimat Bhagavatam says: "When having their births in this Varsha by virtue of their respective acts, come by celestial, human and infernal states; for this Varsha people reap their hereafter by their acts. By respectively observing the different ways of attaining emancipation instituted in this Varsha, men may attain emancipation. When one obtains the society of those devoted to Vishnu, then one conceives a



profound veneration for the reverend Vasudeva, the soul of all beings, without anger or any other evil passion, incapable of being described by speech, without any stay, the Supreme Spirit; and this is an emancipation, for this severs the knot of ignorance that bringeth on many conditions of people. Therefore even the celestials celebrate human life in Bharatvarsha for it is capable of compassing all the highest objects. Ah! what unutterable piety is theirs, and in seeing that the Reverend Hari is propitious to them without the need of their having ministered unto Him! These people have attained births in the land of Bharata worthy of serving Mukunda. We long for having our births in Bharata. Alas! of what avail has been to us the difficult sacrifices, devout penances, vows, gifts and the trivial attainment of heaven where there is no remembrance of the lotus feet of Narayana, which has been destroyed by over addiction to senses. We, whose life extends over Kalpa, have conquered this region but we shall have to be born again; but Bharata, which people of short lives conquer, is superior to ours for they, in their mortal shapes, having within a short time consigned their respective actions, attain to the feet of Hari... Let us be born in Bharatvarsha by the remnant, if any, of sacrifices which we have completely performed and by which we have been enjoying the pleasures of heaven for then we shall think that Hari is adorable; and from which happiness betides His votaries".<sup>58</sup>

People all over India had the greatest emotional attachment to Bharatvarsha from time immemorial despite caste, creed and colour, linguistic and regional barriers. Religion was the most abiding force in this regard. 'There was no Hindu in India, whether he was an inhabitant of Kerala or Konkan, Kashmir Valley or Brahmaputra Valley, who did not long for visiting Kasi, when there was no rail and other transport facilities. Hindus went on pilgrimage to Kasi, Gaya and other holy places on foot before the advent of the railways, spending sometimes years together in their journey. Salvation of the soul was the first and foremost goal of a Hindu. No individual ruler was ever successful in conquering the entire length and breadth of India from Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Baluchistan to Burma. Absence of a unified system of government throughout the recorded history of India was not, at the same time, a hurdle to the people in expressing their allegiance to Bharatvarsha.

Sabara, who flourished not later than the 5th century A.D. in his *bhashya* on Jaimini (X.1.35 & 42) had shown that there was unity of language and culture from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.

Chakravartins in ancient India brought about the whole of Bharatvarsha under their control. Among these mythical sovereigns we include Mandhata, Dhundhumara, Harischandra, Pururavas and Kartavirya Arjuna. The last of such Chakravartins, who in the list of the Puranas stands 11th, who ruled over Bharatvarsha was Bharata, son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala. It was after this Chakravartin that the land is named.

### *Etymology of Bharata*

There are at least four theories about the meaning of Bharata or Bharatvarsha. Vedic testimony favours the Bharata tribe, but most of the Puranas support the claim of Bharata, who was the great grandson of Priyavrata Manu. Poet Kalidasa and sage Vyasa have lent their powerful support to Bharata, son of Dushyanta. The Agni Bharata handed down to us since the Brahmanic period is still aglow.

## 1. VEDIC BHARATAS

Bharatas were the most war-like tribe during the Rig Vedic period. They drove away the Aryans, the earlier immigrants, from the Punjab to further southward into Rajasthan or eastward beyond the Yamuna. Nahusas, who were the earliest Aryan immigrants, opposed the Bharatas under their leader Pururavas.<sup>59</sup> We find the army of the Bharatas standing on the right bank of the Beas near its confluence with the Sutlej, and a Rishi imploring the two rivers to allow the army to cross them.<sup>60</sup> They crossed the Sutlej into the land of Pururavas and defeated him.<sup>61</sup> The victory was celebrated by performing a *yajna*.<sup>62</sup> Bharatas could not retain the new territorial acquisition for long as they were, in turn, defeated by Paktha king, Susrava Turvayana. The Bharatas recovered their prestige by defeating a powerful confederation of Sambara and his ally Varchin. The kingdom of the Bharatas was at the zenith of its prosperity during the reign of Divodasa. The Nahusas who smarted under their old wounds, in the meanwhile, formed a confederation of 10 principalities

and a concerted attack was made on the Bharatas under Divodasa.<sup>63</sup> The Bharatas with the help of the Prithus (Parthavas of Iran) and the Parsus (Persians), fought against the Nahusas on the Ravi and succeeded in defeating them.<sup>64</sup> Vasishta and his family were the priests of the Bharatas and a civil war engineered by them brought about the disintegration of this once mighty kingdom.<sup>65</sup>

The Bharatas were the most warlike and brave among the Aryan stock. The number of battles won and the horse-sacrifices performed by them was indeed a legion. Their kings like Divodasa, Sudas and others were very famous during the Rig Vedic period. The Satapatha Brahmana says: "The greatness of the Bharatas neither the men before nor those after them attained, nor did the seven (tribes of) men, even as a mortal man (does not touch) the sky with his flanks".<sup>66</sup> They ruled over the tract between the Sutlej and the Yamuna. Kings in later times added the title Bharata to their names to enhance their prestige. Thus, the Kurus assumed the title of Bharata and their extensive territory was known as Bharata or Bharat. The reference to "Bharati Praja" in our ancient literature is the legacy of this Bharata tribe of Vedic fame.

"The term Bharata which meant a warrior, connotated piety also, because its derivative Bharati has been used as the name of the goddess of prayer, or to mean prayer.<sup>67</sup> An increasing number of kings took fancy for the name Bharata which meant a pious warrior. Dighanikaya Mahagovinda Sutta says that kings of Sindhu were known as Bharatas; and, among the descendants of Kartavirya Arjuna of Mahishmati, was a dynasty of kings called Bharatas. The name became popular and spread throughout the country, which became Bharata (or Bharat), being the land of the Bharatas".<sup>68</sup>

There is no doubt that the Bharatas were the undisputed masters of a part of Northern India at one time and "Bharati Praja" denoted those inhabited that area or their descendants. However, Bharatas could not hold their sway over the minds of people all over India from the Vedic times to the present day as their exploits were not sung in the epics and Puranas. They were rather a forgotten people. We should, therefore, dismiss their connection with the etymology of Bharata or Bharatvarsha.

## 2. KING BHARATA

Jambudvipa, in the restricted sense, was called Haimavata/Himavavarsha<sup>69</sup> as the perpetually snow-clad mountains guarded it from the north. Manavas or human beings were the residents of Bharatvarsha. Other parts of Jambudvipa (world) were the preserve of mythical creatures. The connection of Manavas and Bharata was sought to be put on a firm basis by the description of Manu as the Bharata on the ground that he was the Father of Mankind and that he nourished them (*Bharanat prajanachaiva bharanachcha prajanam vai Manurbharata uchyate*). Svayambhuva (self-born) Manu was the first ruler of the world. His son Priyavrata Manu, assigned it to his son Agnidhra. Agnidhra had nine sons to each of whom he assigned the nine Varshas of Jambudvipa. The lands south of the Himavavarsha were given to Nabhi, son of Agnidhra. Nabhi's son was Rishabha. Rishabha voluntarily abdicated and took to ascetic life, after putting his son Bharata on the throne. Bharata lived for a long time and ruled over the sub-continent in an exemplary manner. This memorable event was immortalised by the country being called after Bharata, the Puranas say.<sup>70</sup>

As there is a tradition that Manu himself was called Bharata<sup>71</sup> and the claim of Bharata, son of Rishabha, is thus contested, we are unable to settle it. Moreover, he does not have stepped out of his Puranic preserve.

## 3. AGNI BHARATA

The Satapatha Brahmana says: "Far, far famed is this Agni of the Bharata (tribe)—the Bharata doubtless, is Prajapati, for he sustains (*bhar*) this entire (universe)".<sup>72</sup> Bharata is thus the name of fire, which was so called because it was the mainstay of the whole community (*sarva-praja*). Culture was symbolised as Agni Bharata. "Like a fountain it overflowed into myraid streams, moving along the courses of rivers and valleys. It created on its march new fire-altars, i.e., centres of civilization, until at last the Pilgrims' Progress covered the entire expanse of the country.

"This sublime conception of the unity of the country being brought about through the torch of culture aglow throughout the land, is of a beauty and sublimity unique in the whole range

of Sanskrit literature. It would be hard to find another passage which, besides being as true to its ancient pattern is of greater significance to our modern life. In fact, the cultural unity thus envisaged at the very outset of Indian thought, became the lasting charter of that intellectual and religious synthesis which has distinguished the history of this nation. Gradually the stream of culture, began to pour itself into the life-cup of the differing peoples settled on the land, and when the vase was full it overflowed, saturating the country and welding the many elements into one harmonious whole.

“Bharata Agni, as the great symbol of light implanted in the hearts of men, dominated this vast cultural drama and finally gave its own name to the country. This was the basis of the name Bharata, a name applied to the country of all those who accepted that cultural synthesis as the culmination of their own past history”.<sup>73</sup>

The thought contained in the passage just quoted is too subtle, but the man in the street is unlikely to be carried off his feet by such scholarly sermons. There is nothing heroic or legendary to hold his imagination in this abstract concept of culture.

#### 4. BHARATA—SON OF DUSHYANTA

Bharata, son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala, has been the darling of the common man all over India ever since Kalidasa introduced him in his drama (*Abhijnana Sakuntala*), counting the teeth of a lioness, pulling out her cub which had not yet finished suckling her dug. “Open thy mouth O lion! I will count your teeth”, tells the little hero.<sup>74</sup> No wonder the sages called him “Sarvadamana”. Dushyanta himself was the first to notice the marks of a Chakravartin (universal sovereign) bore by his son. Sage Maricha predicted that “Sarvadamana, after conquering the seven seas and by supporting the world will acquire the name Bharata”.<sup>75</sup>

Long before Kalidasa wrote his famous drama, and sage Vyasa his great epic Mahabharata, Satapatha Brahmana had proclaimed that Bharata, son of Dushyanta performed seventy-eight horse-sacrifices on the Yamuna and fifty-five on the banks of the Ganga, making the number total to 133.<sup>76</sup> The same Brahmana added: “The greatness of Bharata neither the men

before nor those after him attained".<sup>77</sup> Bharata is said to have altogether performed more than one thousand Asvamedhas after conquering the whole world.<sup>78</sup> Bharata ruled for 27 thousand years and the land was, therefore, called after him.<sup>79</sup>

Bharata is the only Chakravartin<sup>80</sup> recorded in the Puranas who brought under his subjugation the Kiratas, Hunas, Yavanas, Andhras, and all the Mlechchas. He held his sway over the whole of India after giving it a government. The Mahabharata makes it clear that the conquering chariot wheels of Bharata measured the earth up to the encircling oceans, together with its deep forests and high mountains. By the time Vyasa composed his great epic, the name Bharata had become established as the designation of the whole country.<sup>81</sup> The Brahma Purana has confirmed that Bharatvarsha got its name from Bharata, who was "Sarvadamana", and a Chakravartin.<sup>82</sup> Kalidasa invested Bharata with the insignia of a rare charm and valour. The traditions of Bharata, son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala, are so powerful that the mind of the common man is attuned to it. He cannot think of any other Bharata as his liege-lord.

Moreover, Mahabharata, "the great battle of the descendants of Bharata", describes the 18 days' fight between Duryodhana, leader of the Kurus, and Yudhishtira, chief of the Pandavas, who were cousins, both being descended from Bharata, son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala. The daily reading of the great epic Mahabharata in the homes of millions of people have given Bharata such a place that it is difficult to banish him from their hearts. The connection of all other Bharatas with the etymology of Bharatvarsha pale into insignificance in the presence of "Sarvadamana" Bharata, son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala.

Hind, Hindustan, Aryavarta and other names applied to India in the past by foreigners and our own people alike, smacked of regionalism and parochialism. The designation of Hind and Hindustan as applied to India were misnomers and were contributed by the Arabs. Aryavarta sounded of Aryan hegemony. Aryans did not cross the Vindhya and the name Aryavarta was never applied to India as a whole. The Vedas, epics, and Puranas did not give currency to Aryavarta and other names. They all sang the praise of Bharatvarsha, of which Bharata is a short

form. Even the gods in the heavens sang the glory of Bharat (*gayanti devah kila gitakani*) and longed for being born in this land for achieving their supreme goal. The mere utterance of the name Bharat was enough to rally round millions and the slogan of "Bharata Mata Ki Jai" brought forth the best sacrifice from them all. The utterance of the name Bharat filled the hearts of everyone in this vast sub-continent with a rare pride and called forth the best example of heroism. The magic of the slogan, "Bharata Mata Ki Jai" was immeasurable. The name Bharata acted as a magic wand in our freedom struggle. When the cry of "Bharata Mata Ki Jai" arose from the throats of all our people, the British Government had no other choice but to pack off. *Bande Mataram*, the immortal song of Rishi Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, played so conspicuous a role in the national integration and freedom struggle that its impact is difficult to assess in words. This was a song in praise of *Bharata Mata*, or Bharat as conceived as Mother. We shall discuss the *Bande Mataram* song in the next Chapter.

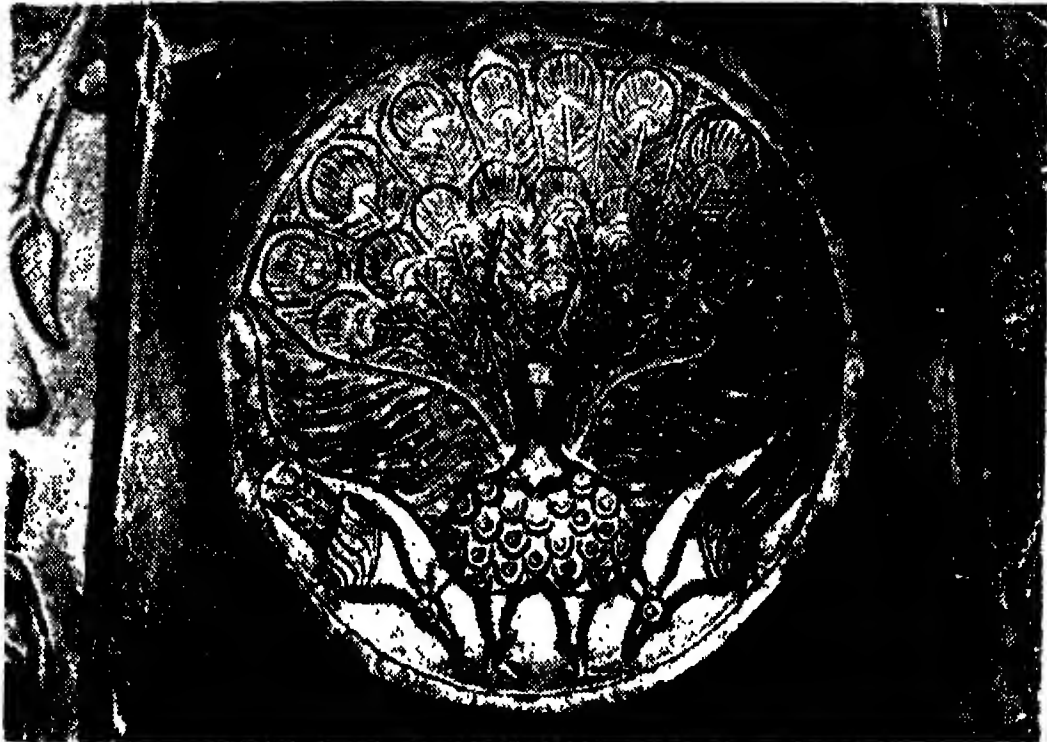
The name Bharat given for India by the Constitution is the most appropriate one. Unlike other names suggested, it has no religious, regional, parochial and sectarian ring in it. Bharat is the land of all—Hindus, Muslims, Christians. Parsis, Jews and Adivasis—to live in and die for.



12.

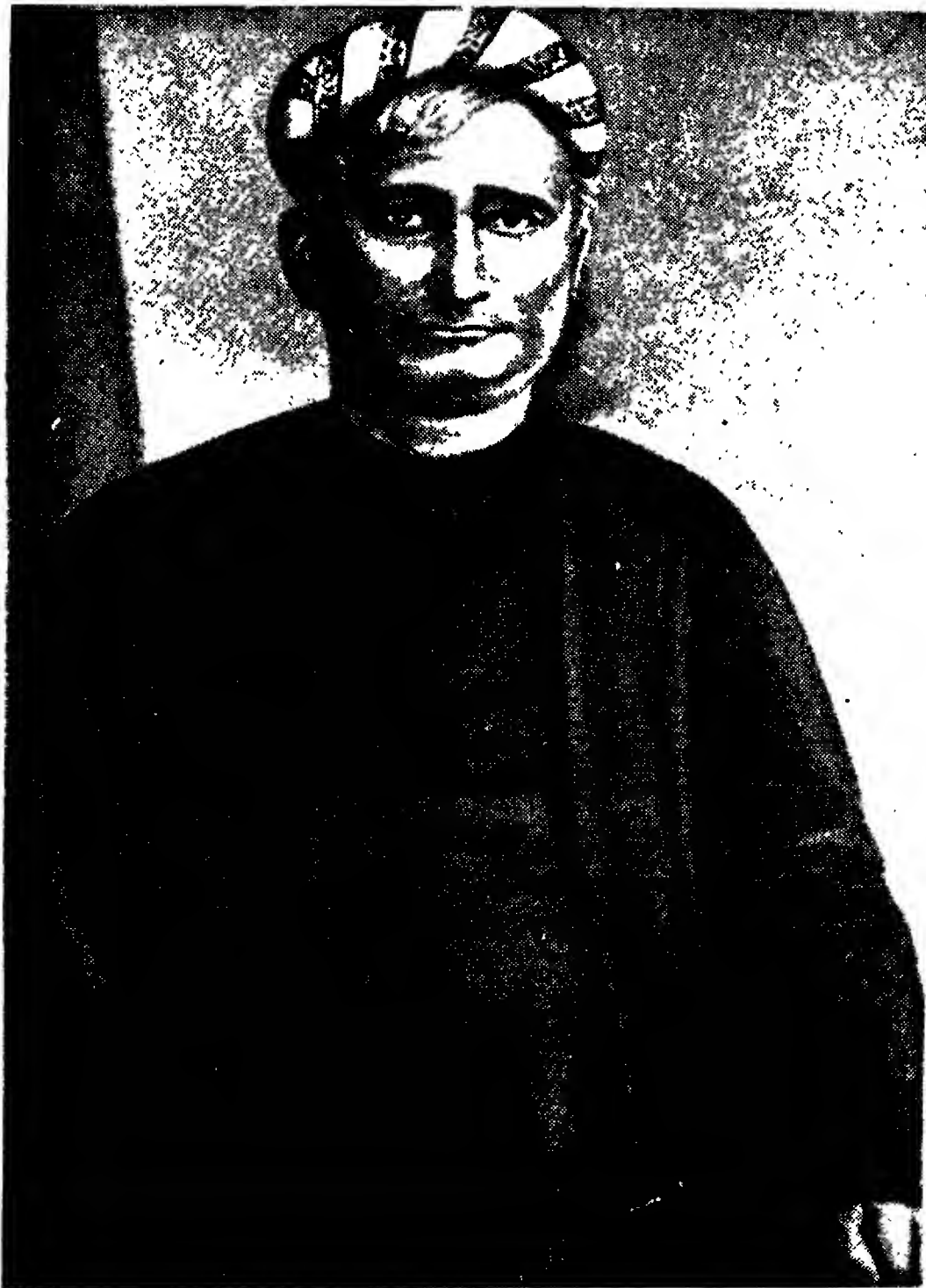
**SKANDA-KARTIKEYA WITH HIS PEACOCK**  
(A Calendar Picture)





9.

THE PEACOCK FROM BHARHUT  
circa B. C. 2nd Century  
(Indian Museum, Photo : Radhakanta Paul)



**BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE**  
*Author of **Bande Mataram***







## 2

### BANDE MATARAM—OUR NATIONAL SONG

*Bande Mataram* which has played a historic role in the struggle for Indian freedom, “shall be honoured equally with *Jana Gana Mana* and shall have equal status with it”. This declaration was made by President Dr. Rajendra Prasad in the Constituent Assembly of India on Tuesday, January 24, 1950, while formally adopting *Jana Gana Mana* as our National Anthem.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and his cabinet colleagues in West Bengal made a vigorous plea to Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to grant official recognition to *Bande Mataram* as our National Anthem. He wrote to Pt. Nehru on June 14, 1948: “*Bande Mataram* has a much greater claim to be considered as the national anthem. *Bande Mataram* has behind it a great historical tradition of suffering and sacrifice ever since 1905. Men have sung it in defiance of Government order and have been punished for it. Men have gone to jail, have faced bullets and have gone to the gallows with this song on their lips”.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Roy asserted that *Bande Mataram* was ideally suited as a national anthem as “it represents India of the future, India that is to be—a powerful India, a happy India, a smiling India—an India of victory and fulfilment. As a matter of fact, in this there is no mention of any past struggle”.<sup>3</sup>

However, *Bande Mataram* was considered to be “completely unsuited as a national anthem” as the rest of India voted in favour of *Jana Gana Mana*, “It is and it will continue to be a national song which is intimately connected with our struggle for freedom and which will be revered accordingly”, Pt. Nehru assured Dr. Roy.<sup>4</sup>

*Bande Mataram* is almost all in Sanskrit though the endings and a couple of lines are in Bengali. Its power and spell is felt by everybody in India, whatever be his mother-tongue, without any need for a translation. The first two stanzas of the song, which are generally sung at public gatherings, contain little

Bengali and, as such, few people have ever thought that the song was originally written in Bengali. Pandit Nehru, however, maintained: "As for the words, *Bande Mataram* contains language which most people do not understand. Certainly I do not understand it". Dr. Roy pointed out in this connection: "As regards the language of *Bande Mataram* song not being understood by most people, I would point out that the same difficulty also holds good so far as *Jana Gana Mana* is concerned, inasmuch as a person like you, not to speak of others, cannot follow the meaning of all words of the song".<sup>5</sup>

In this connection it is worth recalling what *The Statesman* wrote on September 24, 1905: "The song, part Sanskrit, part Bengali, gave rise to some literary criticism. Some of Bankim's friends objected to the mixed language of the song, but he offered no explanation and made no alteration to the words. It was in one of those moods when genius is allied to prophecy that the song was composed, and perhaps the Master knew, with the prophet's foreknowledge, that the time would come when the words would be on every lip in Bengal. The Sanskrit is so simple that it can be easily understood by even those who do not understand a word of Sanskrit, while it is a living link with the past reminiscent of the language which our ancient ancestors spoke which is the richest and most perfect of all languages in the world. For purity and loftiness of sentiment, and rich cadence of music *Bande Mataram* is inferior to no patriotic song in the world, while the invocation to the Motherland as Mother is in keeping with the traditional sentiment of the country. The very first line conveys a vision of the mother with her sweet water, sweet fruits and broad expanses of waving green corn, and the note rises higher and penetrates deeper with the flowing march and roll of the magnificent verse. Today the words of this glorious song are rising from thousands of throats, old and young; tomorrow they will go up from millions of throats even as the song predicts. Henceforward in all great undertakings let the first word of praise be for the Land of our birth—Hail Mother, Hail—*Bande Mataram*!"

Sri Aurobindo's words in this connection are also worth quoting: "We needed a language which should combine the strength, dignity or soft beauty of Sanskrit with the verve and

the vigour of the vernacular raciness and at the other of the most sonorous gravity. Bankim divined our needs and was inspired to meet it...". What made *Bande Mataram* popular was its stately diction, fine musical rhythm and its earnest patriotism.

Another objection to *Bande Mataram* being selected as our National Anthem was raised by some 'Muslim friends' who had misconceived it as a song in praise of the Hindu goddess Durga. This notion was prevalent ever since the song was born and was not confined to this community. Some Englishmen had maintained that the song was an invocation to the terrible goddess Kali.<sup>6</sup> The Indian National Congress could not formally adopt *Bande Mataram* as our national anthem on account of the exception taken by the 'Muslim friends'. The Congress Working Committee held at Wardha on August 14-17, 1937, issued a lengthy statement<sup>7</sup> in which it was explained: "The first two stanzas of *Bande Mataram* described in tender language the beauty of the motherland and the abundance of her gifts. There was absolutely nothing in them to which objection could be taken from the religious or any other point of view. The song was never sung as a challenge to any group or community in India and was never considered as such or as offending the sentiments of any community. Indeed the reference in it to thirty crores of Indians makes it clear that it was meant to apply to all the people of India... There is nothing in these (first two) stanzas to which anyone can take exception. The other stanzas of the song are little known and hardly ever sung. They contain certain allusion and a religious ideology which may not be in keeping with the ideology of other religious groups in India.

"The Committee recognize the validity of the objection raised by Muslim friends to certain parts of the song. While the Committee have taken note of such objection in so far as it has intrinsic value, the Committee wish to point out that the modern evolution of the use of the song as part of national life is of infinitely greater importance than its setting in a historic novel before the national movement had taken shape. Taking all things into consideration therefore the Committee recommend that wherever the *Bande Mataram* is sung at national gatherings only first two stanzas should be sung, with perfect freedom



to the organizers to sing any other song of an unobjectionable character, in addition to, or in the place of, the *Bande Mataram* song”.

### *History of Bande Mataram*

The great novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (June 26, 1836—April 8, 1894) was going home on a September evening in 1875 from Calcutta in a train. The train from Sealdah took him to Naihati from where his house at Kantalpara was only a matter of walk. It was a holiday. The poet in Bankim Chandra was bewitched in the course of the journey by the beauty of the Bengal countryside with its lush green vegetation, colourful flowers swaying in the breeze to the call of gurgling streams and tanks. The Nature in its many splendoured-beauty lay before the poet in vast expanse. He was thrilled by the beauty of Nature, his Motherland. He had the vision of the Mother, the primeval Mother, and made obeissance to Her and sang: “*Bande Mataram...*”. He noted the words on a piece of paper after reaching home.

A few days later Bankim was sitting in his editorial chair at the *Bangadarshan* office. The press-manager wanted some ‘copy’ for composing to fill up two pages. Bankim passed on the sheet of paper on which he had written the *Bande Mataram* song. The press-manager told Bankim: “What a hotch-potch you have written, Sir, half in Sanskrit, half in Bengali. It would have been an excellent piece...”. Bankim told him curtly: “You cannot realise the significance of the song now, but if you live 25 years more, you will see Bengal in raptures over it”. Sri Aurobindo, to whom we are indebted to this anecdote to see not only all Bengal but all India accept the song as the added: “Perhaps the vision and the faculty divine made Bankim Chandra make this prophecy. And the manager has lived to see not only all Bengal but all India accept the song as the National Anthem and its opening words engraved on the Cenotaph of the great Shivaji”.<sup>8</sup>

Few people took notice of the song *Bande Mataram* when it appeared in the *Bangadarshan*. However, Bankim’s intimate friends—Rajkrishna Mukhopadhyaya, Chandranath Basu, poet Navin Chandra Sen and others—read the song carefully. Navin Sen told Bankim: “You see, it is all good, but the whole thing is spoilt in a pot-pourri of half-Bengali and half-Sanskrit. It

reminds me of Govinda Adhikari's jatra-song. People do not like it". Bankim was really hurt and told Navin: "All right Navin, if you don't like it, don't read. My heart liked it so I wrote. Am I not to write what I feel? Or should I only cater to the fancied likings of the common people?"<sup>9</sup>

Jadu Bhatta, the famous singer of those days, was charmed by *Bande Mataram* and he set the song to tune, the *raga* was Malhar and, *tan* Kawali.

Seven years after, Bankim wrote his *Ananda Math*,<sup>10</sup> in 1882, and *Bande Mataram* was incorporated into it (Chapter 10) on account of his strong conviction that patriotism was the religion we needed. In fact the novel was written to give lyrical expression to the message of *Bande Mataram* in the background of the Sanyasi Rebellion. Mahendra was assaulted by robbers and thrown into a country cart, bound hand and foot. He and Bhabananda fell to talking in the moving cart, under a glorious full moon. Bhabananda burst into the song, "Bande Mataram sujalam suphalam...". The song astonished Mahendra, and he could understand nothing of it. He asked, "Who is this mother rich with hurrying streams, bright with the orchard gleams, cool with the winds of delight?" Bhabananda without giving any answer continued his song: "Subhra Jyotsna, pulakita...". Mahendra said, "That is the country, it is not the Mother". Bhabananda replied: "We recognize no other Mother. 'Mother and Motherland is more than heaven itself'. We say the motherland is our mother. We have neither mother, nor father, nor brother, nor friend, wife, nor son, nor house, nor home. We have her alone, the richly-watered, richly fruited, cool with delightful winds, rich with harvests" and so on.

*Bande Mataram* began to be read after the publication of *Ananda Math*. Jadu Bhatta's musical rendering of the song also helped it in becoming popular. It was quoted in the *Balak Patrika*, 1882 (Jyaishtha 1292). Balendra Nath Tagore was inspired by the song and wrote in the *Bharati* (1887): "With the strength of their heart, religion and literature the Bengalee will hoist the banner of victory over the world and under the glory of their victory the Bengalee will sing in their own tune their own song *Bande Mataram*".<sup>11</sup> Prophetic words indeed.

The Indian National Congress and *Bande Mataram* became

inseparable from the day it assembled in Calcutta in 1886 for the holding of its second session. The famous lawyer-poet, Hemchandra Banerji, sang *Bande Mataram* through his 'Rakhi-bandhan' at this Congress session held on December 27th. The Town Hall of Calcutta echoed and re-echoed with the sonorous voice of Hemchandra.

Mother India awakens  
 On the East Bengal, Magadh, Bihar,  
 Dera Ismail and side of Himalayas  
 Karachi, Madras, city of Bombay,—  
 Surat, Gujratis Maharastri brother  
 All surround the Mother on all sides  
 Placing palm upon palm in loving embrace  
 The heart of each has opened  
 All are of one mind and tune  
 Sing victory of joy.  
 With overwhelmed love they clasp each other to  
 their hearts,  
 Sing, everybody in sweet voice  
 Sing — BANDE MATARAM —  
 "Sujalam, Sufalam, Malayaja Shitalam —  
 Sashyashyamalam Mataram.  
 Subhra-Jyotsna-Pulakita Jaminig  
 Fulla Kushamita Drumadala Shovining  
 Suhasining Sumadhurobhasining  
 Sukhadam Baradang Mataram —  
 Bahubaladharining, Namami Tarining,  
 Ripudala barining Bahde Mataram".  
 That voice rose high in city after city  
 In place of pilgrimage and temples with victorious  
 sound  
 India and the world became inspired.  
 Joy is flashed in the face  
 By placing mother on the heart's throne  
 Holding her feet every body,  
*Wears the garland of unity.*<sup>12</sup>

Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, presided over this session and no less than 426 delegates attended the Congress. Dr. Rajendralal Mitra, the great Oriental scholar, in

his address as the Chairman of the Reception Committee said: "We live not under National Government but under a foreign bureaucracy; our foreign rulers are foreigners by birth, religion, language and habits—by everything that divides humanity into different sections. They cannot possibly dive into our hearts". Indeed few Englishmen then understood the true meaning of *Bande Mataram*.

People were indifferent to *Bande Mataram*, but Bankim had the firm conviction that his song was destined to become the battle-cry of the nation. He confided to his eldest daughter in his deathbed: "One day you will see this *Bande Mataram* will stir the whole nation from the depths of its heart".<sup>13</sup> Bankim passed away on April 8, 1894.

Rabindranath Tagore liked *Bande Mataram* better than any of his songs and sang it, dressed in white robes, in his own tune, at the 12th session of the Indian National Congress held at Beadon Square, not far from his ancestral house, under the presidency of Rahimtulla M. Sayani. "The song in the nectar-like voice of the poet and accompanied by an organ played on by his brother Jyotindra Nath produced an electric sensation".<sup>14</sup> Rabindranath had composed the tune for the first seven lines of *Bande Mataram* in 1885.<sup>15</sup> This information is contained in a book of songs called "Satagaan", published by Saraladevi in 1307 B.S. (1900).

We are lucky to possess *Bande Mataram* in the voice of Rabindranath as H. Bose, the pioneer recordist of India, did not miss the opportunity to record the song then sung by the poet, without the help of a loud-speaker in 1896. He first recorded the song on cylinder and released it (No. 36250). Later he transferred it to the flat disc in 1906. Even Rabindranath's rendering of *Bande Mataram* did not help it attract much attention. Rabindranath says of *Bande Mataram*: "When I set tune to the song *Bande Mataram* and sang it before a vast assemblage of people in a Congress Session held in Calcutta, I felt myself electrified from top to toe and my very existence was overwhelmed with a deep emotion. It was not a song, it was molten fire and every line and every word of it engulfed the audience. This sacred *mantra* which we received from a sear, intensified the nation's desire for freedom during the first decade of this century when the whole country was convulsed

following the rash and mad act of an unscrupulous imperialist in the person of Lord Curzon".<sup>16</sup>

*Bande Mataram* was not used as a war cry during the life of Bankim Chandra. It was not used as a political slogan before 1905. Nationalism in India became militant with the proposal for Partition of Bengal. *Bande Mataram* was there till then, but it had to be revived as a sacred *mantra*. Militant nationalism found full expression in *Bande Mataram* and the song became popular.

Curzon's folly was responsible for making *Bande Mataram* the national *mantra*. The great national awakening following the proposal on July 20, 1905, for the Partition of Bengal made the people of India indignant. The cry of *Bande Mataram* rent the evening air of Calcutta on August 7, 1905, when students took out a procession to Town Hall from College Square. Sri Aurobindo recalls the occasion in 1907: "It is thirty two years ago that Bankim wrote his great song and few listened; but in a sudden moment of awakening from long delusions the people of Bengal looked round for the truth and in a fated moment somebody sang *Bande Mataram*. The *mantra* has been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism".<sup>17</sup> Bal Gangadhar Tilak also characterised it as a fateful moment when Bengal uttered the *mantra* of Indian Nationalism.

Singing of the song *Bande Mataram* or shouting of the slogan *Bande Mataram* was banned by the British Government after the Town Hall meeting where the decision to boycott British goods was taken. Thus, the Swadeshi movement came into existence. The British bureaucrats rightly considered *Bande Mataram* as the most powerful force behind the national insurrection and an open invocation to the goddess Kali for vengeance. The seed of a mighty revolution was ingrained in the two words of *Bande Mataram*. The foreign government understood the meaning of the song and a circular was, accordingly, issued by the Government of East Bengal suppressing the cry of *Bande Mataram* in the streets. The skies of Bengal rang with 'a redoubled force with the holy cry of open and courageous worship of the Mother rising out of the throbbing heart of the nation, on account of the ban', according to Rabin-dranath Tagore. "Bad rulers serve a useful purpose in the

evolution of nations. They stir up the sleeping lion from his torpor; they stimulate public spirit and foster national unity", wrote Sir Surendranath Banerjea.<sup>18</sup>

The Partition of Bengal was to take effect from October 16, 1905 and the streets of Calcutta echoed from the early hours of that morning with the cry of *Bande Mataram*. A Society called "Bande Mataram Sampradaya" was formed in October 1905, to popularise the song. Kumar Manmatha Nath Roy was its President. The members of the Society used to march through the streets of Calcutta on every Sunday morning singing *Bande Mataram* and collecting funds. Poet Rabindranath once joined the procession. Dwijendra Lal Roy was one of the active members of this society who regularly participated in the processions.

That *Bande Mataram* had stirred the hearts of the people of Bengal in 1905 is evident from Satish Chandra Mukherjee's comments in the *Dawn* Magazine of November 1905: "*Bande Mataram*, Hail Mother!—What Bengali heart is not set beating faster at the sound of the two magic words? When the late Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in his immortal work—*Ananda Math*, the 'Abode of Joy'—first sang the heart-stirring and soul-lifting song, the opening words of which have furnished Modern Bengal with a battle-cry and a divine inspiration, so to say—could he have dreamt of the transformation—the miraculous and wonderful transformation which the two mellifluous words were destined to work in the hopes and aspirations of his degenerate countrymen. The welkin now rings with *Bande Mataram*. The streets and lanes of Calcutta and of the rest of the province resound with the solemn watch-word. *Bande Mataram* has stirred the hearts of the people to their depths".

*Bande Mataram* was sung at the Congress session held at Benares in 1905 by Sarala Devi (Chowdhurani, a niece of Rabindranath) despite its ban in Bengal. Sister Nivedita who was present at this Congress session has recorded that "when *Bande Mataram* was sung it threw the whole audience into a state of wild but dignified excitement". Since then *Bande Mataram* was a must at every Congress session.

The Bengal Provincial Conference was held on Saturday, April 14, 1906 at Barisal, under the presidentship of Abdul

Rasul. The cry of *Bande Mataram* was banned in the streets of Barisal, and indeed of all the towns in Bengal. The volunteers and delegates wore *Bande Mataram* badges instead, but they were struck with lathis by the police badly hurting some of them. This unprovoked and brutal lathi-charge was greeted with the cry of *Bande Mataram*. The hero of the Barisal Conference was young Chittaranjan Guha who greeted every stroke of the lathi with the cry of *Bande Mataram*. It was a supreme effort of resignation and submission to brutal assault without resistance and without questioning. Chittaranjan was thrown into a tank full of water by the police, in which, if he had not been rescued, he would probably have found a watery grave.<sup>19</sup>

The people of Barisal could not help but express their indignation at the brutality of the British Government. They took out a mammoth procession on May 20, 1906 to condemn the barbarous act. "An unprecedented *Bande Mataram* procession of Hindus and Musalmans, numbering over ten thousand men came out of Babu Deena Bandhu Sen's house at noon...passed through all the principal streets of the town singing national songs and crying *Bande Mataram* and Alla-ho-Akbar. Both Hindus and Mussalmans carried *Bande Mataram* flags", reported the *Bengalee* of May 23, 1906.<sup>20</sup>

The brutality committed at Barisal roused the nation from its stupor. Over ten thousand people assembled in the open air on the Esplanade in Madras. Long before the hour fixed for the meeting, people began to come in streams, shouting *Bande Mataram*. Bepin Chandra Pal, besides starting the revolutionary English daily entitled *Bande Mataram* on August 6, 1906, took the song to Andhra Pradesh in the same year.<sup>21</sup> Poet Subramania Bharati composed a patriotic song in Tamil based on *Bande Mataram*. Thus, *Bande Mataram* became the national song by 1906 and it became the *mantra* of the nation.

A Nagpur report in *The Hindu* of October 28, 1907, said: "A curious *Bande Mataram* incident in a city school happened this afternoon. Dr. Bepin Krishna inspected the school. The boys who greeted him with cries of 'Bande Mataram' were admonished. The seventh standard sections were suspended. The fifth was threatened with fine. Twenty-five boys were handed over to the police lock-up and after five hours' confinement they were released on bail. Investigations are proceed-

ing. The boys unfrightened gave bold, truthful statements. Great sensation prevails".<sup>22</sup>

"The cry, at one time banned and barred and suppressed, has become pan-Indian and national, and is on the lips of an educated Indian when on any public occasion he is moved by patriotic fervour to give expression to his feelings of joy. What is equally important to note is that it is no longer regarded by officials as the rallying cry of seditious men, intent on breaking the peace or on creating a disturbance", wrote Sir Surendranath Banerjea.<sup>23</sup>

The official attitude to *Bande Mataram* underwent a change and Sir Surendranath added in 1925: "At one of the recruiting meetings that I attended in North Bengal, I saw British officers standing up with the rest of the audience as the great national song was sung, and soldiers of the Bengalee regiment, wearing the King's uniform, were received by their countrymen, in the numerous towns that they visited, with shouts of *Bande Mataram*! And when they spoke at the recruiting meetings, some of them declared within the hearing, and with the full approval, of their officers that nothing would give them greater pleasure, or fill them with more patriotic pride, than to attack the German trenches with the cry of *Bande Mataram* on their lips".<sup>24</sup>

The first flag hoisted as our national symbol was called the *Bande Mataram* Flag as it contained the words "Bande Mataram". This flag was hoisted at Parsi Bagan Square (renamed Greer Park and now called Sadhana Sarkar Udyan), Calcutta, on August 7, 1906. The national tricolour flag hoisted by Madame Bhicaji Cama at Stuttgart on August 18, 1907, had also the sacred words *Bande Mataram* inscribed on it. She started a monthly journal called the *Bande Mataram* in 1909 while residing in Paris.<sup>25</sup> Her leaflet entitled *Bande Mataram* appeared in 1907. Mahatma Gandhi concluded his presidential address at the Beigam Congress (1924) with *Bande Mataram* and so did Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at the Congress of Karachi (1931).

*Bande Mataram* was considered to be a synonym for resistance to British imperialism. The use of the first two stanzas of the song gained national significance and its formal adoption as our national anthem before Independence was considered



unnecessary. The popular usage gave it a special and national importance as it had become an integral part of our national movement. Acharya Jagdish Chandra Bose, the great scientist, was once asked by Subhas Chandra Bose, if we could have *Bande Mataram* as our national anthem. He had no hesitation in saying: "The children cannot distinguish their mother from motherland by whose beneficence they are born and brought up. The chanting of the name of the Motherland has come out spontaneously from the heart of the people and vibrated all over India. Because this cry is the cry of the inner life of India...*Bande Mataram* is not a mere poem—it is our unquestioned and unrivalled national song which has come out of the heart of the people".<sup>26</sup>

#### *Meaning of Bande Mataram*

Though the first two stanzas of the song *Bande Mataram* are unimpeachable on any count, the reference to Hindu goddesses was taken exception to by some of the Muslims in 1937. They were under a misconception. Let us, therefore, read the song in full, and explain Bankim's philosophy behind it.

The first stanza beginning with *Sujalam* and ending with *sukhadam varadam* is an impassioned description of the beauty and charm of the Motherland, with its nights of moonlit splendour, with its hills and dales, forests and rivers. The second stanza beginning with *Trisat* (originally *Sapta*) *koti*...describes the combined power of thirty crores of her sons and holding sixty crores of swords in their hands, marching forth to serve the Mother and to vanquish her enemies. She is asked, "Abala keno ma etabale? (Mother, why then do they call you weak and fragile)". It proceeds, "Thou art the strength of our arms and the love of our hearts". The mother is worshipped here in the three aspects of energy, splendour, and wisdom as Maha Kali, Mahalakshmi, and Maha Sarasvati. "Toma-rai pratima gati mandire mandire... (i.e., your image is installed in every home)". It is the outpouring of a passionate devotion of the son to the mother, invoking her boundless strength and valour, when he sets out to defend the mother and proclaim her.<sup>27</sup>

*Bande Mataram* "is neither Hindu nor Muslim in its contents. The Mother conceived is not an ordinary religious deity, but a

new entity, the mother-country in which we live and move and have our beings. The mother country is not a mere mass of territory but a living entity working through her sons and fulfilling her mission through them. Bankim discovered the religion of patriotism and gave an undying utterance to it in his *Bande Mataram*. Chatterjee's patriotic doctrine of the country as the object of worship is integrally associated with his Comtist religion in which humanity (and not divinity) commands adoration. *Bande Mataram* is a Comtist hymn, an anti-theocratic ode of rationalism, freed from the cult of gods", says an author quoting Benoy Kumar Sarker.<sup>28</sup>

### *Relevance of Bande Mataram*

"Men of genius scatter their ideals broadcast. Some of them fall on congenial soil. Time and the forces of Time nurse them. They ripen into an abundant harvest fraught with unspeakable good to future generations", wrote Sir Surendranath Banerjea.<sup>29</sup> Bankim was such a genius or *Rishi*. He gave us the vision of our Mother, the Motherland. The idea of the Motherland was not in itself a great driving force; the mere recognition or the desirability of freedom was not an inspiring motive. It was not till the Motherland revealed herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it was not till she took the shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that dominated the mind and seized the heart that the petty fears and hopes vanished in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, that patriotism worked miracles and saved a doomed nation. Bankim had that vision and he revealed it in *Bande Mataram*. The Mother of his vision held trenchant steel in her twice seventy million hands and not the bowl of the mendicant. Once such a vision of the Mother was given to the people there was no rest, and no further slumber till Her temple was raised and Her image installed and the sacrifice offered. This is exactly what happened and what *Bande Mataram* achieved.<sup>30</sup>

Bankim Chandra, according to Radhakumud Mookerji, elevated patriotism into a religion in his *Bande Mataram* and the Motherland (*Desa Narika*) into a regular deity. To Bankim, Motherland is the great Mother of all Mothers, recalling our

ancient maxim, *Janani Janmabhūmischa swargādāpi garivasi* (Mother and Motherland is greater than Heaven itself). This eternal truth finds further expression in the *Virat deha* of Mother (India) who is richly endowed by Nature. The poet conceived the Mother as the Mother of Mothers and described her divine manifestations such as Durga, Kamala or Lakshmi, Vani or Saraswati, the source of all that maketh Man, his knowledge (*vidya*), his religion (*dharma*), the very core (*marma*) of his heart (*hrit*), the very breath of his life (*pranah sareere*), prowess (*sakti*) of his arms and the devotion (*bhakti*) of heart. The Motherland is the deity enshrined and worshipped in every temple because it is through love of the country that one achieves breadth of vision and purity of heart, that lead to the attainment. Truly, the service of Man is worship of the *Sakti*, the Primeval Mother.

Bankim Chandra was no doubt inspired by the Vedic conception of Democracy. Radhakumud Mookerji says: "Bankim Chandra's National Song was no doubt inspired by a hymn of the Rig Veda, the last Sukta of the last Mandala of the Rig Veda, the prayer offered by Rishi Angirasa to his chosen Deity, who from his name, may be taken as the Deity of Democracy. That name is a most singular and abstract name ever given to a Deity of worship. He is called the Deity of Saminana or Samajnana, a name which, according to Sayanacharya, symbolizes the national, collective, political consciousness evenly spread (*sama*) among a whole people, what may be called the National Mind whom individual minds are to invoke as the source of their own vitality. It is *visvachaitanya*, cosmic consciousness, oversoul, in which the individual soul is to be merged in Yoga. For Yoga is but the Union of Jivatma with Paramatma. The Rig Veda describes the *mantra* with which this Deity of Democracy is to be worshipped by its votaries, the *mantra* of complete inner union of their hearts (*hridaya*) and mind (*manah*), their hopes and aspirations and in national policy (*mantra*).<sup>31</sup>

To Sri Aurobindo *Bande Mataram* was not only a song, but it was also a *mantra* of the nation; like an individual, every nation had a triple-form of existence—the gross, the subtle, and the causal. The truth of one's soul-existence was stronger than his physical. Only the Seer, the *Rishi* could see the

Soul-truth; Bankim was such a *Yogi* or *Rishi* of India, who had not only seen the inner truth but also had given a *mantra* of it, that *mantra* was *Bande Mataram*.

During our struggle for freedom, we needed a voice, we needed strength, dignity and soft beauty in our self-expression. Bankim in his immortal song divined our need and was inspired to meet it; he gave us a means by which the soul of India could express itself. The Mother was revealed to us. *Bande Mataram* gave us the religion of Patriotism.

We conclude this Chapter with Prime Minister Nehru's words: "*Bande Mataram* is obviously and indisputably the premier national song of India, with great historical tradition and intimately connected with our struggle for freedom. That position it is bound to retain and no other song can displace it. It represents the passion and poignancy of that struggle, but perhaps not so much the culmination of it". *Bande Mataram* was created by history and in turn it created history. It was immortalised by Bankim Chandra and he was, in turn, immortalised by it.

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22. Parthasarathy, Rangaswami, *A Hundred Years of The Hindu*, Madras, 1925, p. 171.
- 23-24. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
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26. *Calcutta Review*, July-September 1957, p. 46; Moni Bagchee, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
27. *Our National Insignia*, (Ghoshti Book House) Amalapuram, 1954, P. Appa Rao's article on Our National Anthem.
28. Mukherjee, H. & U., *op. cit.*, Chapter I.
29. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
30. Adapted from Sri Aurobindo's 'Rishi Bankim Chandra' in the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, vol. 27, p. 347.
31. From R.K. Mookerji's Foreword to Ghoshti Book House's *Our National Insignia*, Amalapuram, 1954, p. xiii.

# बन्दे मातरम्

बन्दे मातरम् ।

सुजलां सुफलां मलयज शीतलाम्

शस्य श्यामलां मातरम् ।

शुभ्र ज्योत्स्ना-पुलकित-यामिनीम्

कुल-कुसुमित-द्रुमवलशोभिनीम्,

सुहासिनीं सुमधुरभाषिणीम्,

सुखदां खरदां मातरम् ॥

ममकोटिकगठ-कल-कल-निनादकराले

द्विसप्त कोटि भुजैर्वृत खरकरवाले,

अबला केन मा एत बले ।

बहुबलधारिणीं नमामि तारिणीम्

रिपुबलधारिणीं मातरम् ॥

तुमि विद्या तुमि धर्म,

तुमि हृदि तुमि मर्म,

त्वं हि प्राणाः शरीरे ।

बाहुते तुमि मा शक्ति,

हृदये तुमि मा भक्ति,

तोमारह प्रतिमा गडि मन्दिरे मन्दिरे

त्वं हि दुर्गा वशप्रहरणधारिणी,

कमला कमल-दलबिहारिणी,

बाणी विद्यादायिणी, नमामि त्वां,

नमामि कमलां अमलां अतुलाम्,

सुजलां सुफलां मातरम् ॥

बन्दे मातरम्

श्यामलां सरलां सुस्मितां भूषिताम्

धरणीं भरणीं मातरम् ॥

**BANDE MATARAM***(Romanised version)\**

Vande Mataram/  
 Sujalam suphalam malayaja sitalam/  
 Sasyasyamalam mataram/  
 Subhra jyotsna pulakita yaminim  
 Phulla kusumita druma dala sobhinim  
 Suhasinim sumadhura bhashinim  
 Sukhadam varadam mataram/

Koti koti kanta kala kala ninada karale  
 Koti koti bhujair dhrita khara karavale  
 Ke bale ma tumi abale  
 Bahu bala dharinim namami tarinim  
 Ripudala varinim mataram/

Tumi vidya tumi dharma tumi hridi tumi marma  
 Twam hi pranah sarire  
 Bahute tumi ma sakti, hridaye tumi ma bhakti  
 Tomari pratima gati mandire mandire, mataram/

Twam hi durga dasapraharana dharini  
 Kamala kamaladala viharini  
 Vani vidya dayini  
 Namami twaam namami kamalam amalam atulam sujalam  
 Suphalam mataram/      ‘  
 Shamalam saralam susmitam bhushitam  
 Dharanim bharanim mataram/

The Devanagari version of the Bande Mataram printed on page 45 is taken from the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, Twenty-third Anniversary and Independence Commemoration Number, 1947, page 123. The Romanised version is ours. The first three lines of the second stanza in the Devanagari and the Romanised versions do not correspond to each other as they have been changed to suit the march of Time.

*BANDE MATARAM*

(Translation by Sri Aurobindo)

Mother, I bow to thee !  
Rich with thy hurrying streams,  
Bright with thy orchard gleams,  
Cool with thy winds of delight,  
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,  
Mother free.

Glory of moonlight dreams,  
Over thy branches and lordly streams,  
Clad in thy blossoming trees,  
Mother, giver of ease,  
Laughing low and sweet !  
Mother, I kiss thy feet,  
Speaker sweet and low !  
Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,  
When the swords flash out in crores and crores of hands  
And crores and crores of voices roar  
Thy dreadful name from shore to shore  
With many strengths who are mighty and stored,  
To thee I call, Mother and Lord !  
To her I cry who ever her foremen brave  
Back from plain and sea  
And shook herself free.

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,  
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,  
Thou the love divine, the awe  
In our hearts that conquers death.  
Thine the strength that nerves the arm.  
Thine the beauty, thine the charm,  
Every image made divine  
In our temples is but thine.



Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen;  
With her hands that strike and her swords of sheen,  
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,  
And the Muse a hundred-toned.  
Pure and perfect without peer.  
Mother, lend thine ear.  
Rich with thy hurrying streams.  
Bright with thy orchard gleams,  
Dark of hue, O candid-fair  
In thy soul, with jewelled hair  
And thy glorious smile divine,  
Loveliest of all earthly lands,  
Showering wealth from well-stored hands!  
Mother, mother mine !  
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,  
Mother great and free !

## BANDE MATARAM\*

(Another English translation)

I bow to thee, Mother,  
Richly watered, richly fruited,  
Cool with winds of the south,  
Dark with the crops of the harvests,  
The Mother !

Her nights rejoicing in the glory of the moon-light,  
Her lands clothed beautifully with her trees in  
flowering bloom,  
Sweet of laughter, sweet of speech,  
The mother, giver of boons, giver of bliss !  
Terrible with the clamorous shout of seventy million  
throats,  
And the sharpness of swords raised in twice seventy  
million hands,  
Who sayeth to thee, Mother, that thou art weak ?  
Holder of multitudinous strength,  
I bow to her who saves, to her who drives from her  
the armies of foemen,  
The Mother !

Thou art knowledge, thou art conduct,  
Thou art heart, thou art soul,  
For thou art the life in our body.  
In the arm thou art might, O Mother,  
In the heart, O Mother, thou art love and faith,  
It is thy image we raise in every temple.  
For thou art Durga, holding her ten weapons of war,  
Kamala at play in the lotuses.  
And Speech, the goddess, giver of all lore,  
To thee I bow !

Hemendra Nath Dasgupta (*The Indian National Congress*, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 104-105) has also given the above prose English translation of *Bande Mataram* from Sri Aurobinda Ghose. We have given the authorised translation in the preceeding pages.

I bow to thee, Goddess of wealth, pure and peerless,  
Richly watered, richly fruited, the Mother !  
I bow to thee Mother,  
Dark-hued, candid,  
Sweetly smiling, jewelled and adorned,  
The holder of wealth, the lady of plenty,  
The Mother !

# 3

## JANA GANA MANA —OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM

“The composition consisting of the words and music known as *Jana Gana Mana* is the National Anthem of India, subject to such alterations in the words as the Government may authorise as occasion arises; and the song *Bande Mataram*, which has played a historic part in the struggle for Indian freedom, shall be honoured equally with *Jana Gana Mana* and shall have equal status with it”. This announcement was made by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President, in the Constituent Assembly on Tuesday, January 24, 1950 in the Constitution Hall, before the signing of the Constitution of India by the members<sup>1</sup>.

The formal adoption of a song as the National Anthem of India was pending in the Constituent Assembly. There was no unanimity of opinion in the selection of a song as our National Anthem since the attainment of Independence. Bankim Chandra's *Bande Mataram*, which used to be sung as our national song throughout the long struggle for freedom, was a strong contender for the formal recognition as our National Anthem. All but two provinces were in favour of adoption of *Jana Gana Mana* as our National Anthem.

The Government of India could not formally select a song as our National Anthem as it was the prerogative of the Constituent Assembly to do so. The Constituent Assembly appointed a Committee to make recommendations about the final selection of a song as our National Anthem. The Committee, after considerable deliberations, authorised the President to make the final selection of our National Anthem. Accordingly, President Rajendra Prasad announced his decision on January 24, 1950, with the following prefatory statement: “There is one matter which has been pending for discussion, namely, the question of the National Anthem. At one time it was thought that the matter might be brought up before the House and a decision taken by the House by way of a resolu-

### The morning song of India

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people, dispenser of India's destiny.  
 Thy name rouses the hearts of the Panjab, Sind, Gujarat and Maratha, of Deccan  
 and Orissa and Bengal; it echoes in the hills of the Vindhya and Himalayas,  
 rings in the music of the Ganges and the Jamuna, and is chanted by the  
 surging waves of the Indian Sea. They pray for thy blessings and sing thy praise.  
 The saving of all people waits on thy hand, thou dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

Day and night thy voice goes out from land to land <sup>calling</sup> ~~bringing~~ the Hindus,  
 Buddhists, Shikhs and Jains round thy throne and the Parsees, Musalmans and  
 Christians. The East and the West join hands in their prayer to thee, and the  
 garden of love is woven. Thou bringest the hearts of all people into the harmony  
 of one life, thou dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, victory, victory to thee.

The procession of pilgrims passes over the ~~wide~~ <sup>rough</sup> road rugged with the  
 rise and fall of nations, and it resounds with the thunder of thy wheels,  
 Eternal Charioteer! Through the dire days of doom thy trumpet sounds and  
 men are led by thee across death. Thy finger points the path to all people,  
 O dispenser of India's destiny!

Victory, Victory, victory to thee!

The darkness was dense and deep was the night. My country lay in a deathlike  
 silence of swoon. But thy motherarms were round her and thine eyes gazed  
 upon her troubled face in selfless love. Through her hours of ghastly dreams  
 Thou art the companion and the saviour of the people in their sorrows, thou  
 dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, victory, victory to thee!

The night ~~darkens~~ <sup>falls</sup>; the light breaks over the peaks of the Eastern hills; the  
 birds begin to sing and the morning breeze carries the breath of new life.  
 The rays of thy mercy have touched the waking land with their blessing.  
 Victory to thee King of Kings, Victory to thee, thou dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, Victory, victory to thee.

Rabindranath Tagore

Feb. 28. 1919

The English version of the song 'Jana-gana-mana' in  
 Rabindranath's autograph

tion. But it has been felt that instead of taking a formal decision by means of a resolution it was better if I make a statement with regard to the National Anthem”.

Soon after Independence *Jana Gana Mana* was provisionally selected as our National Anthem by the Union Cabinet as there were ceremonial occasions when it was to be sung. *Jana Gana Mana* had gained practical acceptance as our National Anthem throughout the country after Independence. The Sikh Regiment struck the tune of the song at the hoisting of the National Flag at the first anniversary of Independence at the Red Fort in Delhi on August 15, 1948.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister, made the following statement in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) on August 25, 1948 about the National Anthem :

“The question of having a National Anthem tune to be played by orchestras and bands became an urgent one for us immediately after August 15, 1947. It was as important from the point of view of our Defence Services and our foreign embassies and legations and other establishments. It was obviously not suitable for “God Save The King” to be played by our army bands, or abroad, after the changeover to independence. We were constantly being asked as to what tune should be played on such occasions. We could not give an answer because the decision could only be made ultimately by the Constituent Assembly.

“The *Jana Gana Mana* tune, slightly varied, had been adopted as National Anthem by the Indian National Army in South-East Asia and had subsequently attained a degree of popularity in India also.

“The matter came to a head on the occasion of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1947 in New York. Our delegation was asked for our National Anthem for the orchestra to play on a particular occasion. The delegation possessed a record of *Jana Gana Mana* and they gave this to the orchestra who practised it. When they played it before a large gathering it was very greatly appreciated, and representatives of many nations asked for a musical score of this new tune which struck them as *distinctive and dignified*. This orchestral rendering of *Jana Gana Mana* was recorded and sent to India. The practice grew for our Defence Services bands to play this

tune, and foreign embassies and legations also used it whenever occasion required. From various countries we received messages of appreciation and congratulation of this tune, which was considered by experts and others as *superior to most of the National Anthems* which they had heard. Many expert musicians in India and abroad, as well as many bands and orchestras practised it, and sometimes slightly varied it, with the result that the All-India Radio collected quite a number of renderings.

“Apart from the general appreciation with which this tune was received, there was at the time not much choice for us, as there was no proper musical rendering available to us of any other National Song which we could send abroad. At that stage, I wrote to all the Provincial Governors and asked their views about our adopting *Jana Gana Mana* or any other song as the National Anthem. I asked them to consult their Premiers before replying. I made it perfectly clear to them that the final decision rested with the Constituent Assembly, but owing to the urgency of some directions being sent to foreign embassies and the Defence Services, a provisional decision had become essential. Every one of these Governors, except one (the Governor of the Central Provinces) signified their approval of *Jana Gana Mana*. Thereupon, the Cabinet considered the matter and came to the decision that provisionally *Jana Gana Mana* should be used as the tune for the National Anthem till such time as the Constituent Assembly came to a final decision.

“Instructions were issued accordingly to the Provincial Governors. It was very clear that the wording of *Jana Gana Mana* was not wholly appropriate and some changes would be necessary. What was important was the tune to be played by bands and orchestras and not the wording.

“Subsequently the new Premier of West Bengal informed us that he and his Government preferred *Bande Mataram*.

“That is the position at present. It is unfortunate that some kind of argument has arisen as between *Bande Mataram* and *Jana Gana Mana* . . .

“In regard to the National Anthem tune, it was felt that the tune was more important than the words, and that this tune should be such as to represent the Indian musical genius as

well as to some extent the western, so that it might equally be adaptable to orchestral and band music, and for being played abroad. The real significance of the National Anthem is perhaps more abroad than in the Home country. Past experience has shown us that *Jana Gana Mana* tune has been greatly appreciated and admired abroad. It is very distinctive and there is a certain life and movement in it. It was thought by some people that the *Bande Mataram* tune with all its very great attraction and historical background was not easily suitable for being played by orchestras in foreign countries, and there was not enough movement in it. It seemed, therefore, that while *Bande Mataram* should continue to be the national song *par excellence* in India, the National Anthem tune should be that of *Jana Gana Mana*. The wording of *Jana Gana Mana* is to be suitably altered to fit in with the existing circumstances..."<sup>2</sup>

"*Jana Gana Mana*", Pandit Nehru stated, in his letter dated 15th June, 1948 to Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the then Premier of West Bengal, "was played at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel last October before an international gathering. This was at the time of the United Nations meeting. It produced a sensation and the representatives of the foreign nations said that it was one of the finest things as a national anthem they had heard. There was a tremendous demand for it among Americans as well as many others who were present. When we heard this we asked for records and on receiving these, we suggested that Army bands should practice it. Immediately it became popular with the Army and it is now regularly played by the Army, the Navy and the Air Force on occasions when a National Anthem is played".<sup>3</sup>

Pandit Nehru added: "We have consulted numerous eminent musicians including some of the biggest orchestra conductors in foreign countries. *Bande Mataram* does not yield itself to good orchestration or military playing. *Jana Gana Mana* has an ideal lilt about it which is greatly approved.

"When rather automatically *Jana Gana Mana* began to get popular for military and other playing, I wrote to all the Governors and Premiers about it and asked them what their views were. With one or two exceptions all plumped for *Jana Gana Mana* and most of them said that this was popular in their provinces.



"It was at this stage that we considered it in Cabinet here and decided that *Jana Gana Mana* should be provisionally used as national anthem till such time as a final decision is made. The matter was urgent and some provisional decision had to be given because there are so many official occasions in India and abroad when something has to be played as a national anthem. Repeated demands came to us and we had to give an answer" . . . .

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, in his reply dated June 24, 1948, to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, agreed with him "that a national anthem should have a lilt about it in its music which could be played in other countries as much as in the home country. I was present last October at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel when *Jana Gana Mana* was played and I know also that it was received very well by the representatives of the foreign nations"<sup>4</sup> . . .

The first stanza of *Jana Gana Mana* was sung by Srimati Sucheta Kripalani just after the conclusion of the historic Constituent Assembly on the midnight of August 14, 1947 when power was transferred to the people of India.

What weighed in the selection of *Jana Gana Mana* as our National Anthem was its musical quality, coupled with its intrinsic merit. "...A National Anthem is something different from a song which represents the struggle and the longing which *Bande Mataram* so powerfully represents. A national anthem should be something of victory and fulfilment, not of past struggle", Pandit Nehru explained in his letter dated 15th June 1948 to Dr. B. C. Roy. He added: "A national anthem is chiefly music and not words. It has to be music which has a lilt about it and which can be played satisfactorily all over the world. In fact it is played more in other countries than in the home country. Every embassy of ours has to play it. Foreign offices and embassies have to play it. *Jana Gana Mana* has come into prominence as such without any effort on our part to begin with".<sup>5</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi liked *Jana Gana Mana* "which has found a place in our national life. How often is the inspiring refrain heard from thousands of voices! It is not only a song but is also like a devotional hymn".<sup>6</sup>

*Message of Jana Gana Mana*

*Jana Gana Mana* reflected the change of political conditions which took place in India ever since Bankim Chandra wrote his *Bande Mataram*. *Bande Mataram* was the gospel of the freedom fighters and independent India needed a song which reflected our national ideals and aspirations. India with its many races and cultures was in need of a song which underlined the basic unity in diversity and an exhortation to her people to keep to the Right Path. *Jana Gana Mana* admirably expressed these principles in a language which was understood by people throughout the length and breadth of this vast country. There is no wonder why the whole of India, with a solitary exception, favoured it, for their National Anthem.

It is admitted on all hands that *Jana Gana Mana* prepares the ground for an eclectic mind, divorced from narrow sectarian prejudices and parochial allegiance, which is so essential for national harmony and unity. The freedom it exalts is not only the freedom from political slavery, freedom from want and freedom from hunger, but freedom for the mind. Thus, our National Anthem is keeping in tune with our national honour and international friendship.

With its *rathachakra* imagery, *Jana Gana Mana* is in perfect harmony with our National Crest and National Flag, which embody the *Dharma Chakra* motif. As has been admirably put by one writer:

“On the poet’s showing cosmic history is dissolved into moments of song, but when it displays poetry not of moments, but of men and movement, a pageant of Time which is creation and the creator. There is felicity of expression, a spell of eloquence, almost continual inspiration, but then if one tries to unlock the wells of poetic creation, it must be understood to relate to the world of social emotion. The whole inspiration is summed up in an intense cumulative moment and afterwards set forth in its broad manifold bearings—a phenomenon akin to what Mozart meant by saying that he heard his musical pieces not in a succession of notes but all at once as one whole and later arranged them out. The inspiration is all-but-uttered, and in *Jana Gana Mana* not much is left out of reach”.<sup>7</sup>

*Netaji's Legacy*

There is no denying the fact that freedom of India is as much the legacy of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose as is our National Anthem. Credit goes to Netaji for adopting *Jana Gana Mana* as our National Anthem before we achieved Independence. Netaji reached Germany in 1941 and opened the office of the Free India Centre or the Indian Independence League in Bonn in November that year. The first meeting of the Free India Centre was held on 2nd November 1941. The war-cry *Jai Hind*, the title of the national hero—*Netaji*,—our National Anthem—*Jana Gana Mana*—and our national language—*Hindustani*—were adopted on that day. The adoption of a national anthem was the third item on the agenda. N. G. Ganpuley, Netaji's confidant, tells us: "The third thing of national importance which was considered at that meeting was the choice of one good and impressive National Anthem whose tunes would thrill our minds and give us always fresh life and energy to defend our liberties and uphold our national honour. We had nothing like a recognised National Anthem in India and in its stead some song or other was sung at the beginning or the close of a meeting according to the choice of the organiser. That song or songs did not carry the spirit and seriousness of a National Anthem. Sometimes songs of provincial or local importance only were sung as 'national songs'. They had neither the content nor the appeal of a 'national song'. After the upheaval of the Bengal Partition, when the extremist group began to dominate the national movement, *Bande Mataram* came to be sung at the Congress and other political meetings, but it was hardly sung with the spirit and emotion of a national hymn. It appealed more to our religious sentiments and as such was in the mood of a prayer to our deity, Mother India. It was very cogently and enthusiastically argued at the meeting in Berlin that *Jana Gana Mana* which defined India as the union of all provinces and religions was more suited for being a National Anthem and was therefore adopted after some debate on the subject . . .

"The adoption of *Jana Gana Mana* is no small tribute paid by the Republic of India to the small band of patriots under Netaji.

"This National Anthem was played and sung for the first time with full orchestra accompaniment on the occasion of the opening ceremony of Indo-German Cultural Society in Hamburg in 1942, and a gramophone record made of the same on that occasion is still available. It was also on this important and historic occasion that, for the first time, the Indian National Flag fluttered proudly in a foreign country, side by side with the National Flag of that country".<sup>8</sup>

Anand Mohan Sahay, Minister of the Azad Hind Cabinet, says: "The original song *Jana Gana Mana* used to be sung as our National Anthem by the Indians in Germany under the leadership of Netaji and Netaji himself directed the Bandmaster of I.N.A. in practising the tune of *Jana Gana Mana*. He himself sung *Jana Gana Mana* with enthusiasm when he used to be alone"<sup>9</sup> . . .

#### *History of Jana Gana Mana*

*Jana Gana Mana* was first sung in Calcutta on December 27, 1911 at Greer Park<sup>10</sup> (now Sadhana Sarkar Udyan, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Road—opposite Calcutta University's Science College), during the 26th session of the Indian National Congress. Pandit Bishan Narain Dar of Lucknow presided over this session and Bhupendra Nath Basu was the Chairman of the local Reception Committee. Amal Home was one of the choir of young men and women who sang the song led by Dinendranath Tagore.<sup>11</sup> The official report of the 26th session of the Congress states:<sup>12</sup>

"...The Congress re-assembled on Wednesday the 27th December at noon. The proceedings commenced with a patriotic song composed by Babu Rabindra Nath Tagore".

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Bengalee* and other nationalist dailies of Calcutta reported the proceedings of the 26th session of the Indian National Congress. The *Patrika* wrote on December 28, 1911: "The proceedings began with the singing of a Bengali song of benediction"...The *Bengalee* of the same date is more explicit in its report: "The proceedings commenced with a patriotic song composed by Babu Rabindranath Tagore, the leading poet of Bengal (*Jana Gana Mana Adhina-yaka*), of which we give the English translation—'King of the heart of nations, Lord of our country's fate'...". Sir Surendra-

nath Banerjea was the principal organiser of the 26th session of the Congress and the report that appeared in his paper, the *Bengalee*, should be taken as authentic.

Sir Rabindranath Tagore's magnificent *Jana Gana Mana* song was chanted at the second day's sitting of the 33rd session of the All India Congress, held under the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant on Saturday, 29th December, 1917, with Maharaja Bahadur of Natore himself joining in aid of the instrumental music, according to the *Bengalee* of December 30, 1917. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (December 31, 1917) characterised *Jana Gana Mana* sung on the occasion as 'an inspiring patriotic song'. The *Statesman* (December 30, 1917) clearly stated that a 'national song composed by Sir Rabindranath Tagore having been sung'...

Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das paid a high tribute to the song from the Congress platform in his speech delivered after the lunch-break at quarter to three on that day (29th December, 1917). He said: "Brother delegates, at the very outset I desire to refer to the song to which you have just listened. *It is a song of the glory and victory of India.* We stand here today on this platform for the glory and victory of India"<sup>13</sup> (Cheers).

### *Controversy*

Since there is a controversy over the issue whether *Jana Gana Mana* was actually sung to welcome their Imperial Majesties in 1911 and to glorify British rule in India, it is proper we remove such a misconception, though it is unnecessary to do so from the history of the song we have just traced. Calumnists who spread such canards have done little harm to the poetic genius and the singular purity of the Poet's life which raised India in the estimation of the world. Rabindranath's philosophy was beyond their reach. We have only pity for the calumnists, for they exposed themselves in their malicious attempt to denigrate the Gurudev.

*Jana Gana Mana* was composed by Rabindranath Tagore at the request of his intimate friend, Asutosh Chaudhuri, a Judge of the Calcutta High Court (1912-1920). Asutosh was a staunch Congressman and the song was intended for singing at the 26th session of the National Congress.<sup>14</sup> "The song was later sung at the anniversary-festival of the Brahmo Samaj on

25th January, 1912, at the ancestral house of the Tagores at Jorasanko, which now goes by the name of Maharshi Bhavan.

The *Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka* song was first published under the title, 'Bharata-Vidhata', in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, the official organ of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore's Adi Brahmo Samaj, in January 1912. Rabindranath Tagore was its Editor then. At that time the song was sub-titled *Brahmo-sangit* (Divine Song).<sup>15</sup> The English rendering of the song was, however, published earlier in the *Bengalee* on December 28, 1911. Later, it was incorporated in Rabindranath's *Dharma-Sangit*, a collection of religious hymns. *Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka* (Almighty), whose praise is sung in the song, is the *Bharat-bhagyavidhata* (Dispenser of India's Destiny) and the *Chirasarathi* (Eternal charioteer). The poet invokes here the Almighty, who is the Dispenser of India's destiny. The 'Eternal charioteer', who 'drivest man's destiny along the road rugged with rises and falls of Nations' is none other than the All-Powerful. He is the King of all Kings. The song is not addressed to any mortal being. That is why 'thy trumpet sounds to hearten those that despair and droop' and 'guide all people in their paths of peril and pilgrimage' amidst all trials and tribulations.

Rabindranath himself explained the origin of *Jana Gana Mana* in 1937 in order to dispel any notion that it was sung in praise of the British monarch. He said in a letter (20.11.1937) in the *Vichitra*, Paush 1344 (p. 709):

"A friend influential in Government circles had importuned me to compose a song in praise of the King. His request had amazed me, and the amazement was mingled with anger. It was under the stress of this violent reaction that I proclaimed in the *Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka* song, *the victory of that Dispenser of India's destiny who chariots eternally the travellers through the ages along the paths rugged with the rise and fall of nations—of Him who dwells within the heart of man and leads the multitudes. That the Great Charioteer of Man's destiny in age after age could not by any means be George the Fifth or George the Sixth or any other George, even my 'loyal' friend realised; because, however powerful his loyalty to the King, he was not wanting in intelligence*".<sup>16</sup>

The poet reiterated that *Jana Gana Mana* was not sung in praise of King George V on 29.3.1939 in another letter to the *Purvasa*, Phalgun 1354 (p. 738):

“I SHOULD ONLY INSULT MYSELF IF I CARED TO ANSWER THOSE WHO CONSIDER ME CAPABLE OF SUCH UNBOUNDED STUPIDITY AS TO SING IN PRAISE OF GEORGE THE FOURTH OR GEORGE THE FIFTH AS THE ETERNAL CHARIOTEER LEADING THE PILGRIMS ON THEIR JOURNEY THROUGH COUNTLESS AGES OF THE TIMELESS HISTORY OF MANKIND”.<sup>16a</sup>

Needless to say, *Jana Gana Mana* was neither composed for, nor sung at the Coronation Durbar of King George V, held at Delhi in December 1911. This was evident from the official account of the Delhi Durbar and the King's visit to Calcutta, *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit to India*, 1911, published by John Murray, London, in 1914, under the authority and order of the then Viceroy of India. There was no mention of any such song in this authentic account. These facts are sufficient to clear misconceptions, if any, that *Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka* was not composed and sung by the Poet in praise of King George V.

Then, what is the genesis of this misconception? Two Calcutta dailies—*The Englishman* and *The Statesman*—of 28th December 1911 misreported the second day's proceedings of the 26th session of the Indian National Congress. A Hindi song, composed for welcoming their Imperial Majesties, was actually sung on 27th December just after the singing of the *Jana Gana Mana*, invoking the God Almighty. The reporters of *The Englishman* and *The Statesman* did not differentiate Rabindranath's song from the Hindi poem of praise. They were under the impression that the Poet's *Jana Gana Mana* was in praise of the British monarch. They reported that a 'song of welcome to the King Emperor, specially composed by Babu Rabindranath Tagore' was sung by the Poet on the occasion. The Reuter's message in the *India* (29th December, 1911), a weekly journal published from England, also contained this wrong report. These reports escaped the notice of Rabindranath Tagore then, for had he come to know of these discrepancies, he would have

issued contradictions. Thus, a misconception was created and it gained strength in the English minds over the years until it was contradicted by the Poet in 1937.

Rabindranath did not seek recognition from the British Government. The Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to the Poet in November 1913. This was naturally a jolt to the British Government. The British Government realised their mistake and conferred Knighthood on the poet on the King Emperor's birthday (3rd June, 1915), as an afterthought. The Poet renounced his Knighthood on May 30, 1919. The imperialists recognised the genius of the Poet only after he achieved international fame. These points are stressed here to emphasise the fact that Rabindranath had no need for singing the praise of King George V. *Jana Gana Mana* had the original sub-title of 'Brahmo-sangit' (Divine Song) when first published in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. As a Brahmo by religion, the soul of Rabindranath did not allow him to sing in praise of any other god, but the Almighty.

The Poet was *persona non-grata* with the British Government till he won the Nobel Prize. In fact, Rabindranath was harassed by the imperialists for singing *Jana Gana Mana*. The Director of Public Instruction of the then East Bengal and Assam had issued a secret circular which the *Bengalee* published in its issue of 26th January 1912. The secret circular said:

"It has come to my knowledge that an institution known as the 'Santiniketan' or 'Brahmacharyasrama' at Bolpur in the Birbhum District of Bengal is a place *altogether unsuitable for the education of the sons of Government servants*. As I have information that some Government servants in this province have sent their children there, I think it necessary to ask you to warn any well-disposed Government servant whom you know or believe to have sons at this institution or to be about to send sons to it, to withdraw them or refrain from sending them, as the case may be; *any connection with the institution in question is likely to prejudice the future of the boys who remain pupils of it after the issue of the present warning*".<sup>17</sup>



*Congress and National Anthem*

The Indian National Congress had never selected a song as our national anthem throughout its chequered history. *Bande Mataram* had won that recognition from 1905 onwards. It was set to music by Rabindranath Tagore in 1896 and the song used to be sung invariably at the beginning and end of almost all mass meetings in Bengal, if not in the whole of India. Initially the song and the words were considered to be symbols of our national resistance to British imperialism in Bengal. The first two stanzas of the song spread to other provinces after 1905 and they became popular. A certain sanctity was attached to it. "At no time, however, was this song, or any other song, formally adopted by the Congress as the national anthem of India. But popular usage gave it a special and national importance", noted the Congress Working Committee held at Wardha, August 14-17, 1937.<sup>18</sup> Popular usage had made the first two stanzas of *Bande Mataram* "a living and inseparable part of our national movement and as such they must command our affection and respect".

As has already been stated in Chapter 2, some Muslim 'friends' objected to the use of *Bande Mataram* as our national anthem as, in their opinion, the song contained references to Hindu deities, especially goddess Durga, worshipped all over Bengal. A bitter controversy arose about its continued use as our national song. The Congress Committee, therefore, appointed a sub-committee consisting of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri Subhas Chandra Bose and Shri Narendra Dev, to examine all national songs then current in India. This sub-committee was asked to examine "only such songs as are composed in simple Hindustani or can be adapted to it, and have a rousing and inspiring tune" and take the advice of Rabindranath Tagore in the selection of a song as the national anthem. Public opinion favoured adoption of *Jana Gana Mana* as the national anthem. The opinion expressed by Dr. James H. Cousins, Principal of the Theosophical College, Madanapalle, in this connection is worth quoting:<sup>19</sup>

"My suggestion is that Dr. Rabindranath's\* own intensely patriotic, ideally stimulating and at the same time world-embracing 'Morning Song of India' (*Jana Gana Mana* . . .) should be

confirmed officially as that it has for almost twenty years been unofficially, namely, the true National Anthem of India. This real expression of aspiration for the highest welfare of a whole people...is universally known in the country. It has a tune and rhythm that make it singable with definiteness, unity and vigour...

*"Jana Gana Mana* specially recognizes the diversity of human life in India, and gives it its true unification, not an impossible uniformity of externals, but the real unity that comes of mutual aspirations towards the Universal Life in which all share...In this all the faiths can join without reservation.

"The adoption of this immortal utterance as the conjoint voice of India would demonstrate a nation's intelligence in recognising the world's greatest and noblest and purest figure in literature. and at the same time would put into circulation thoughts and feelings of the most uplifting and energising kind.

"In times of crisis what more potent call to unity could there be than the second stanza of the great anthem. 'Day and night thy voice goes out from land to land, calling the Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains round thy throne and the Parsees, Musalmans and Christians. The East and the West join hands in their prayer to thee, and the garland of love is woven. Thou bringest the hearts of all people into the harmony of one life, Thou dispenser of India's destiny'.

"In the victory of nation or creed or class there is defeat for all: in the victory of the Universal Life, to which all may turn in terms of their own faith, there is victory for all, and in the expression of allegiance to that Universal Life there is expressed, not the shifty sentiment of expedient tolerance, but the eternal law of unity in diversity".

*Jana Gana Mana* was adopted as the morning prayer song at the Theosophical College ever since Rabindranath sang it at Madanapalle in 1919. The college authorities wanted to "extend its purifying influence by sending copies of it to other schools and colleges in India and by making it known abroad" and requested the Poet, during his stay at Madanapalle, to give his own translation of it. The translation was printed in the Poet's own handwriting in the College Commemoration volume in 1936. Thus, *Jana Gana Mana* spread from Madanapalle to all over the world. This is the story of *Jana Gana Mana*.

In short, *Jana Gana Mana* represents a wide liberal mind so essential to the achievement of National harmony and unity. It is the spirit of the New Testament of the present world, interpreting the National aspiration in terms of peace, love and amity. The freedom it exalts is not only freedom from political bondage but also freedom from the bondage of prejudices, hatred, ignorance and pettiness. It is the typical song of the Republic of India, broad-based, luminous, comprehensive. It is at once consistent with our National honour and international friendship.

In concluding this Chapter, it must be remembered that *Jana Gana Mana* was adopted as our National Anthem, despite the protest lodged by Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and his colleagues in the West Bengal Cabinet. Credit should go to Netaji Subhas Bose for adopting it as the National Anthem of the Azad Hind Government. Pandit Nehru was instrumental in its elevation as the Anthem of India.

Rabindranath Tagore was not only a great poet, but also a great musician. The school of music founded by him is called Rabindra Sangit. *Jana Gana Mana* has the right music in it for singing by anyone on account of the rhythm of its words. *Jana Gana Mana*, as a piece of song and music with its forward looking and progressive ideas, is an immortal creation by an immortal Poet who is dear to the hearts of everyone born in India. We wonder whether the Poet has himself become the *Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka* by this time !

11. *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, Twenty third anniversary and Independence Commemoration Number 1947, p. 79. Also see the letter of Amal Home, who was the Editor of the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* from 1924 to 1948 in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dated December 12, 1947.

## JANA GANA MANA

(in Devnagari  
Script)

॥ १ ॥

जन-गण-मन-अधिनायक जय हे  
भारत-भाग्य-विधाता,  
पाञ्चाव-सिन्धु-गुजराट-माराठा—  
दाविण्-उत्कल-वङ्ग  
विन्ध्य-हिमाल-यमुना-गङ्गा  
उत्तल-जलधि-सरङ्ग  
तव शुभ नामे जागे, तव  
शुभ आशीष मागे,  
गाहे तव जय-गाथा  
जन-गण-मन-मङ्गलदायक जय हे  
भारत-भाग्य-विधाता ।  
जय हे, जय हे, जय हे,  
जय जय जय जय हे ॥

२ ॥

अहरह तव आह्वान प्रचारित,  
शुनि तव उदार वाणी—  
हिन्दु-बौद्ध-शिख-जैन-पारसिक—  
मुगलमान-ख्रिष्टानी ।  
पूर्व-पश्चिम आमे  
तव सिंहासनपाशे  
प्रेमहार हय गाथा,  
जन-गण-ऐक्य-विधायक जय हे  
भारत-भाग्य-विधाता  
जय हे, जय हे, जय हे,  
जय जय जय जय हे ॥

॥ ३ ॥

पतन-अभ्युदय-बन्धुर-पन्था,  
युगयुग धावित यात्री,  
हे चिर-सारथि, तव रथ-चक्रे  
मुखरित पथ दिन-रात्रि,  
दारुण विप्लव-मार्ग  
नव शङ्खध्वनि वाजे,  
सङ्कट-दुःख-प्राता,  
जन-गण-पथ-परिचायक जय हे  
भारत-भाग्य-विधाता,  
जय हे, जय हे, जय हे,  
जय जय जय जय हे ॥

॥ ४ ॥

घोर-तिमिर-घन-निविड-निशीथ  
पीडित-मूर्च्छित-देशे  
जाग्रत छिल तव अविचल मङ्गल  
नत-नयने अनिमेष  
दुःस्वप्न आतङ्के  
रक्षा करिले अङ्गे  
स्नेहमयी तुमि माता,  
जन-गण-दुःखनायक जय हे  
भारत-भाग्य-विधाता  
जय हे, जय हे, जय हे,  
जय जय जय जय हे ॥

॥ ५ ॥

रात्रि प्रभातिल उदिल रविच्छवि  
पूर्व-उदय-गिरि-भाले,  
गाहे विहङ्गम, पूण्य समीरण  
नव-जीवन-रस ढाले,  
तव करुणारण-रागे  
निद्रित भारत जागे  
तव चरणे नत माथा,  
जय जय जय हे, जय राजेश्वर,  
भारत-भाग्य-विधाता  
जय हे, जय हे, जय हे,  
जय जय जय जय हे ॥

## I

Jana-gaṇa-maṇa-adhinayaka  
jaya hē Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.

Panjaba-Sīndhu-Gujrata-Maratha-  
Dravida-Utkala-Vaṅga

Vindhya-Himachala-Yamuna-Gaṅga-  
uchchhala-jaladhi-taraṅga

Tava subha namē jagē,  
tava subha asisa magē  
gahē tava jaya-gatha.

Jana-gana maṅgala-dayaka jaya hē  
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.

Jaya hē, jaya hē, jaya hē,  
jaya jaya jaya jaya hē !

## II

Aharaha tava ghvāna pracharita,  
suni tava uclara vani

Hindu-Bauddha-Sikha-Jaina-  
Parasika-Musalmana-Khristani

Pūrva-paścima aśē,  
tava simhasana paśē  
prēma-hara haya gantha.

Jana-gana-aikya-vidhayaka  
jaya hē Bharata-bhagya-vidhata

Jaya hē, jaya hē, jaya hē,  
jaya jaya jaya jaya hē !

## III

Patana-abhyudaya-bandhura-pautha,  
yuga yuga dhavita yatri

Hē chira-sarathi, tava ratha-chakrē  
mukharita pattha dina-ratri

Detuna-viplava-majhē  
tava saṅkhatihvani bājē  
saṅkata-dukkhatrata.

Jana-gana-patha-parichayaka  
jaya hē Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.

Jaya hē, jaya hē, jaya hē,  
jaya jaya jaya jaya hē !

## IV

Ghōra-timura-ghana-nivida-nisithē  
pidita-mūrchhita dētē

Jagrata chhila tava avichala  
maṅgala nata-nayanē animatē

Duhsvapnē atankē  
raksa karilē ankē  
snēhamayī tumi mata.

Jana-gana-duhkhatrayaka  
jaya hē Bharata-bhagya-vidhata

Jaya hē, jaya hē, jaya hē,  
jaya jaya jaya jaya hē !

## V

Ratri prabhatila udila ravichebhavi  
pūrva-udaya-giri-bhalē,

Gahe vihangama, punya samirana  
nava-jivana-rasa dhalē,

Tava karunatuna-ragē  
nidrita Bharata jagē  
tava charanē nata matha,

Jaya jaya jaya hē, jaya rajśvara  
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata

Jaya hē, jaya hē, jaya hē,  
jaya jaya jaya jaya hē !

*JANA GANA MANA*

(Composer Rabindranath Tagore's own English rendering)

## I

THOU art the ruler of the minds of all people,  
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,  
Thy name rouses the hearts of the Punjab, Sind, Gujarat  
and Maratha, of Dravid, Orissa and Bengal.  
It echoes in the hills of the Vindhya and Himalayas,  
mingles in the music of Jumna and Ganges, and is  
chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea.  
They pray for thy blessing and sing thy praise,  
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,  
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

## II

DAY and night, thy voice goes out from land to land,  
calling Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains round  
thy throne and Parsees, Mussalmans and Christians.  
Offerings are brought to thy shrine by the East and the  
West to be woven in a garland of love.  
Thou bringest the hearts of all peoples into the harmony  
of one life,  
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,  
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

## III

ETERNAL Charioteer, thou drivest man's history along  
the road rugged with rises and falls of Nations.  
Amidst all tribulations and terror thy trumpet sounds to  
hearten those that despair and droop, and guide all  
people in their paths of peril and pilgrimage.  
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,  
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

## IV

WHEN the long dreary night was dense with gloom  
and the country lay still in a stupor,  
thy Mother's arms held her,  
thy wakeful eyes bent upon her face,  
till she was rescued  
from the dark evil dreams  
that oppressed her spirit,  
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,  
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

## V

THE night dawns, the sun rises in the East,  
the birds sing, the morning breeze  
brings a stir of new life.  
Touched by the golden rays  
of thy love  
India wakes up and  
bends her head at thy feet.  
Thou King of all kings,  
Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,  
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.



## JANA GANA MANA

*Musical Notations*

## STHAYI

सा रे ग ग	ग ग ग ग	ग — ग ग	ग॑ रे ग म —
Ja na ga na	ma na o dhi	nā — ya ka	ja ya hē —
म॑ग — ग ग	रे — रे रे	नि॑रे — सा —	— — सा —
Bhā — ra ta	bhāg — ga bi	dhā — tā —	— — Pan —
ला॑प — प प	— प प प	प — प प॑	म॑प म॑ प —
ja — ba Shin	— dhu Gu j	rā — ta Ma	rā — thā —
म — म म	म — म ग	ग॑ रे म ग —	— — — —
Drā — bi da	Ut — ka la	Baṇ — ga —	— — — —
ला॑ग — ग ग	ग — ग रे	प प प —	प॑म — म —
Bin — dha Hi	mā — cha la	Jo mu nā —	Gan — gā —
ग — ग ग	र॑रे रे नि॑	नि॑रे — सा —	— — — —
uch — chha la	ja la dhi ta	raṇ — ga —	— — — —
ग ग ग ग	ग — ग म	रे ग म —	— — — —
Ta ba shu bha	nā — mē —	jā — gē —	— — — —
ग म प प	म॑प — म ग	ग॑ रे म ग —	— — — —
ta ba shu bha	ā — shi sha	mā — gē —	— — — —
ला॑ग — ग —	ग ग ग॑ रे	रे नि॑ रे सा —	— — — —
gā — hē —	ta ba ja ya	gā — thā —	— — — —
ला॑प प प प	प — प म॑	प — प प	प॑म॑ ध प —
Ja na ga na	maṇ — ga la	dā — ya ka	ja ya hē —
म — म म	म॑ग — ग ग म	ग॑ रे म म॑ग —	— — नि नि
Bhā — ra ta	bhāg — ga bi	dhā — tā —	— — Ja ya
नि॑सां — — —	— — ला॑नि ध	नि — — —	— — प प
hē — — —	— — ja ya	hē — — —	— — ja ya
प॑ध — — —	सा सा रे रे	ग ग रे ग म — — —	— — — —
hē — — —	ja ya ja ya	ja ya ja ya	hē — — —

JANA GANA MANA—*ANTARA*\*

सा सा सा सा    सा सा सानि सा    रे— रे रे    रे — रे रे  
 A. ha ra ha    ta ba + āh —    vā — nā pro chā — ri ta  
 रे सा रे ग ग    ग ग — ग    ग रे ग म म — — — —  
 shu ni ta ba    u dā — ra    bā — nī — — — —  
 म प — प प    — म प म    म प म नि ध ध    प म प प  
 Hin — du Baud — dha Shi kha    Jai — na Pā — ra shi ka  
 म म — म    ग ग रे —    रे नि रे सा — — — —  
 Mushal — mā — na Khrish —    tā — nī — — — —  
 ग — ग ग    ग ग ग ग    रे ग म म — — — —  
 Pū — ra ba    pa sh chi ma    ā — shē — — — —  
 ग म म प —    प — म ग    ग रे म म ग ग — — — —  
 ta ba sim —    hā — sha na    pā — shē — — — —  
 ग ग — ग ग    — ग रे रे    रे नि रे सा सा — — — —  
 prē — ma hā — ra ha 'ya    gān — thā — — — —  
 प प प प    म प — प म    म प — प प    प म ध ध —  
 Ja na ga na    oik — ka bi    dha — ya ka    ja ya hē —  
 म — म म    म ग — ग ग म    रे म म ग — — नि नि  
 Bhā — ra ta    bhāg — ga bi    dhā — tā — — — ja ya  
 etc. as in *Sthayi*.

*Rāga*—Yamani Bilawal. °

*Tāl*—Dhumali (Chaturmātrika chhanda ).

Notation according to Bhatkhande system

By V. V. Wazalwar,

Santiniketan.

*The third, fourth and fifth stanzas follow the Antara.*

\* *Jana Gana Mana* (Devanagari script, page 68, and Romanised version, page 69) with its English rendering by the Poet himself (pages 70-71) and musical notations (by V.V. Wazalwar, pages 72-73) reproduced here are from the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, Twenty-third Anniversary and Independence Commemoration volume, 1947, pp. 77-80.

## 4

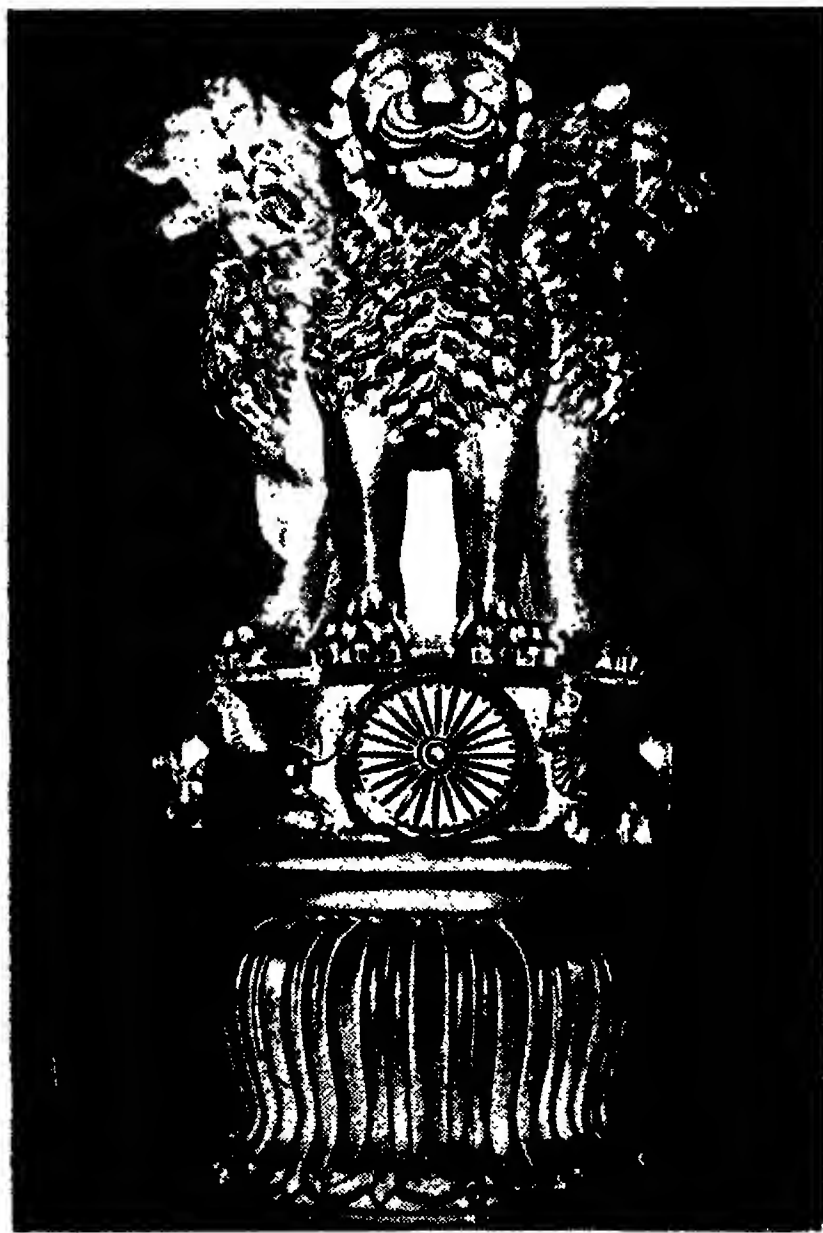
### LION CAPITAL—OUR NATIONAL EMBLEM

The National Emblem of India is the figure of three lions seated back to back on an abacus in the centre of which there is a *chakra* or wheel with 24 spokes with a bull on the right and a horse on the left. The words, *Satyam eva Jayate* ("Truth alone triumphs"), are inscribed below the Emblem in the Devanagari script. This Emblem was adopted on January 26, 1950.

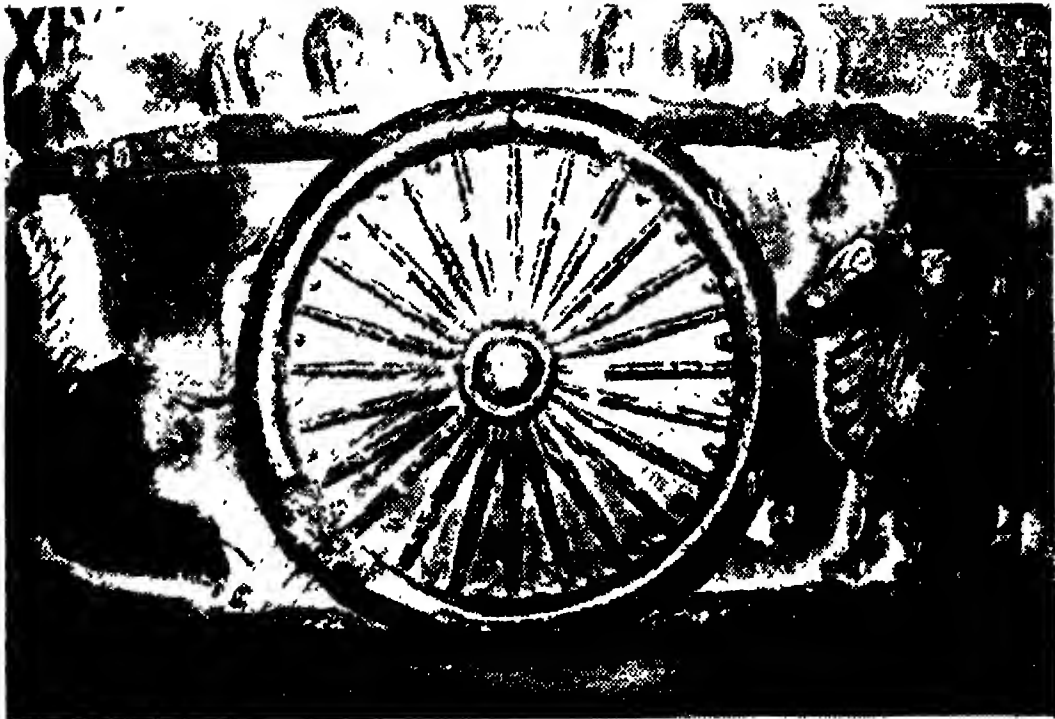
India's National Emblem, or Crest, is a partial reproduction of Asoka's Lion Capital at Sarnath. This Capital is unsurpassed in the whole range of Indian art in point of its significant symbolism. The Capital originally consisted of five component parts, viz., (1) the shaft, (2) a lotus-vase, (3) on which rested an abacus or drum with four racing animals,—an elephant, a horse, a humped bull and a lion in bas-relief, each separated by a *chakra* or wheel of 24 spokes, in the inter-spaces—above which are the (4) figures of four majestic lions seated back to back. The lions carried on their backs (5) a *Dharma-chakra*—an enormous stone-wheel of two-feet and nine inches in diameter. The wheel, now lying in a broken condition, and the lotus-vase have been dropped from the National Emblem, leaving only the four lions and a small wheel below them, as its prominent features. The bull and the horse can be seen only on closer scrutiny.

It was at Sarnath that Gautama Buddha preached his First Sermon, which is known as the 'Dharma-chakka-ppavattana' Sutta in Buddhist canon. Asoka the Great erected his pillar with the Lion Capital at Sarnath to mark the spot of this great event in Buddhism. We shall confine ourselves in this Chapter, as far as possible, to explain the symbolism of the Lion Capital in consonance with the Buddhist philosophy.

Asoka's column with the Lion Capital at Sarnath, near Varanasi (Benares), was discovered in 1905.<sup>1</sup> The original Lion Capital now occupies the pride of place in the central hall of the Archaeology Museum at Sarnath. A plaster cast of it may be seen at the Indian Museum, Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> The following is the



**LION CAPITAL OF ASOKAN PILLAR, SARNATH**  
(Picture postcard, Archaeological Survey of India)



**THE WHEEL ON THE ABACUS OF LION CAPITAL**  
showing the horse (*left*) and bull (*right*) from a plaster cast.  
(Indian Museum, Photo : Radhakanta Paul)

description of the Lion Capital given in the *Catalogue of the Museum of Archaeology at Sarnath*:<sup>3</sup>

“Capital of Asoka column (ht. 7'; width across the abacus 2' 10"). The lower portion, 2' in height, has, as usual the shape of a bell decorated with conventional petals in Persepolitan style. They are sixteen in number. The necking above the bell is circular in horizontal section and has a torus moulding with plain surface. The middle portion, which is fashioned into a circular abacus resembling a common drum 1' 1½" high, is decorated with four wheels, of twenty-four spokes each, in high relief. The ends of the axles are left rough, from which it may be surmised that they were covered with caps probably of precious metal. This is proved by the existence of three fine holes pierced into the rim of each axle, into which metal pins were evidently inserted to keep the caps in position. The spaces between the wheels are occupied by the figures of an elephant, a bull, a horse and a lion, following each other from right to left in the direction of the *pradakshina*. Three of these animals are represented as walking, the horse as running at full gallop. These figures are all more or less damaged, but they are wonderfully life-like and their pose graceful.

The abacus is surmounted with figures of four life-sized lions placed back to back, so that only the fore-parts are shown. They are each 3' 9" high. Two of them are in perfect preservation. The heads of the other two were found detached and have been refixed. The upper jaw of one and the lower jaw of the other were not recovered. In place of eye-balls some sort of precious stones were inserted into the sockets, as is clearly shown by the existence of very fine holes in the upper and lower lids, which received thin iron pins to keep the jewels in position. One such pin still remains in the upper lid of the left eye of one of the lions.

The Capital was carved out of a single block of sandstone but is now broken across just above the bell. It was originally surmounted by a wheel, (*chakra*), the symbol of the Buddhist Law, supported on a short stone shaft. The latter was not discovered, but its thickness can be estimated

from the mortice hole, 8" in diameter, drilled into the stone between the lions' heads. Of the wheel itself, four small fragments were found. The ends of thirteen spokes remain on these pieces. Their total number was presumably thirty-two.

The Capital is one of the most magnificent specimens of art that have yet been discovered in the country.<sup>4</sup> The accuracy of delineation and the feeling of symmetry which pervade every part of the sculpture are not met with except in the few sculptures on the other pillars of Asoka, which have come down to us.

The material of which the capital is made is a black-spotted buff-coloured sandstone from Chunar, but of a much finer grain than the Chunar stone used in the construction of houses in Benares and its neighbourhood. Of the shaft on which this capital originally rested four large fragments were discovered. In addition to these there is the lower portion, about 15' in height, which is standing *in situ* and bears three inscriptions. The earliest one which is a record of Asoka himself is an edict against schismatic monks and nuns who are threatened with expulsion from the Sangha or Buddhist Church . . . ."

Sarnath (Lat. 35° 23' N and Long. 83° 2' E) is a corruption of Saranganatha, which means the 'Lord of the Deer', i.e., Lord Buddha. Sarnath was a part of Rishipatana-mrigadava or Isipatna-migadava of Buddhist records. It is 3½ miles north-east of Benares City and two furlongs away from Sarnath Station of the North-Eastern Railway. The distance between Sarnath and Calcutta is 432 miles. Sarnath was a forest given by the King of Benares for the deer to wander in it unmolested. The Deer Park was the place to which Gautama repaired from Bodh Gaya after his Enlightenment and it was here that the Buddha preached his First Sermon before five ascetics. This event is known as the Turning of the Wheel of the Law (*Dharmachakra-pravartana*) in Buddhist texts and took place in or about 528 B.C. Isipatna-migadava was mentioned by the Buddha as one of the four places of pilgrimage which his devout followers should visit.<sup>5</sup>

Asoka's column at Sarnath was erected about 250 B.C., and bears the following inscription: (The beginning of the edict

which was no doubt addressed to the Mahamatras stationed at Sarnath is damaged) "You should act in such a way that the Sangha cannot be divided by anyone. But verily that monk or nun, who shall break up the Sangha, should be compelled to put on white robes and to reside in what is unfit for the residence of a recluse. Thus should this order be communicated to the Sangha or the monks as well as to the Sangha of the nuns".<sup>8</sup>

Two Chinese pilgrims—Fa-hien and Hiuen-tsang—visited Sarnath in the 4th and 7th centuries and have left their impressions of the Buddhist establishments there. Fa-hien wrote: "Again following the Ganges for twelve yojanas to the west, he arrived at the city of Benares in the land of Kasi. About ten *li* to the north of the city, he came to the shrine in the Deer-forest of the Immortal. In this deer-forest there was once a saintly hermit, with whom the wild deer would often come and pass the night. When the World-Honoured One was about to become a Buddha, the devas in space sang these words: 'The son of king Suddhodana left his home to learn the Truth; seven days hence he will become a Buddha'. The saintly hermit, hearing these words, at once entered into Nirvana. Therefore the place was named the Deer-forest of the Immortal; and later on, after the Buddha had attained to Buddhahood, a shrine was built here".<sup>7</sup>

Hiuen-tsang's description of the Deer Park is more interesting: "To the south-west of the vihara is a stone stupa built by Asoka-rajā. Although the foundations have given way, there are still 100 feet or more of the wall remaining. In front of the building is a stone pillar about 70 feet high. The stone is altogether as bright as jade. It is glistening, and sparkles like light; and all those who pray fervently before it see from time to time, according to their petitions, figures with good or bad signs. It was here that Tathagata (*ju-lai*), having arrived at Enlightenment began to turn the Wheel-of-the-Law (to preach)".<sup>8</sup> The pilgrim saw the Lion Capital, but a work of art did not interest him, for he says: "By the side of these (image and vihara) was an Asoka stone-pillar of a lustrous violet colour and very hard with a crouching lion on the top facing the stairs; quaintly carved figures were on each side of the pillar, and according to one's bad or good deserts figures appeared to him in the pillar".<sup>9</sup> Fa-hien had also seen the "stone pillar, about fifty cubits high,



with a lion on top of it", behind the vihara, but did not describe it.<sup>10</sup>

The Sarnath Lion Capital is the finest expression of ancient Indian art pregnant with spiritual and political significance. There is no other work of art in the ancient world which can stand comparison to it. Its esoteric symbolism has not dawned upon us, and therefore, scholars have put forward different interpretations to explain it. The beauty of the Lion Capital is beyond description and so is its technical perfection. Critics have explained this exquisite masterpiece of Mauryan art and we shall simply quote them, despite the fact that they have missed its soul-stirring symbolism.

Marshall:<sup>11</sup> "In the masterful strength of the crowning lions, with their swelling veins and terse muscular development, and in the spirited realism of the reliefs below, there is no trace whatever of the limitations of primitive art. So far as naturalism was his aim, the sculptor has modelled his figures direct from nature and has delineated their form with bold faithful touch; but he has gone more than this; he has consciously and of set purpose infused a tectonic conventional spirit into the four lions, so as to bring them into harmony with architectural character of the monuments, and in the case of the horse on the abacus he has availed himself of a type well known and approved in western art. Equally mature is the technique of his relief work. In early Indian, as in early Greek sculpture, it was the practice, as we shall presently see, to compress the relief between two fixed planes, the original front plane of the slab and the plane of the background. In the reliefs of the Sarnath Capital there is no trace whatever of this process: each and every part of the animal is modelled according to its actual depth without reference to any ideal front plane, with the result that it presents the appearance almost of a figure in the round which has been cut in half and then applied to the background of the abacus".

Smith:<sup>12</sup> "It would be difficult to find in any country an example of ancient animal sculpture superior\*or even equal to this beautiful work of art, which successfully combine realistic modelling with idealistic dignity, and is finished in every detail with perfect accuracy. The bas-reliefs on the abacus are

as good in their way as the noble lions in the round. The design, while obviously reminiscent of Assyrian and Persian proto-types, is modified by Indian sentiment, the bas-relief being purely Indian. Sir John Marshall's conjecture that the composition may be the work of an Asiatic Greek is not supported by the style of the relief figures. The ability of an Asiatic Greek to be present in Indian animals so well may be doubted".

Coomaraswamy:<sup>13</sup> "Of the numerous extant examples the finest is that of Sarnath erected on the traditional site of the First Turning of the Wheel of Law. The shaft is of plain polished sandstone, circular in section and slightly tapering; the capital consists of four addorsed lions, which originally supported a *Dharma-Chakra* or Wheel of the Law, resting on an abacus bearing in relief an elephant, horse, bull and lion separated by four small *dhamma-chakkas*, below which is the inverted lotus forming the 'bell'."

Brown:<sup>14</sup> "In sharing the credit for these masterpieces, it is felt that the symbolism and imagination, their spiritual message so to speak, was supplied by the Indian mind".

### SYMBOLISM OF SARNATH

Though the basement on which the abacus and lions are mounted is not included in our National Emblem, its description cannot be omitted here as the parts are incapable of being isolated from the whole. Each part of the Lion Capital has its own distinctive symbolism and an understanding of its nature is necessary to appreciate this unique masterpiece of Indian sculpture.

Earlier writers described the base on which the Lion Capital stood as an inverted Indo-Persepolitan bell. There is no place for a bell in Indian sculpture and scholars are now in general agreement that the base represents the lotus vase or *Purna-ghata* motif. The vase is not visible to the naked eye, but only the lotus petals and sepals, 16 in number.

1. *Purna-ghata*:<sup>15</sup> *Purna-ghata* (vase with overflowing lotus petals) represents the miraculous birth of Prince Siddhartha, later the Buddha, at Kapilavastu. Though the lotus flower is the necessary medium for symbolising supernatural birth in

Buddhist iconography, it was neither created by Buddhists, nor even for them, for the Atharva Veda (XIX.53.3) takes the *Purna Kumbha* (the full vessel) as the womb which conceals within it the mystery of the birth of all creatures.

*Bhadra-Kalasa*,<sup>16</sup> *Purna-Kalasa*, *Purna-Kumbha* etc. are the Vedic terms for the brimming water-vessel (*Purna-ghata*) which is the most auspicious symbol used in rituals. People all over India invariably place a *Mangala-Kalasa* or *Mangala-ghata*, as a propitious omen, at their door-steps and shop-fronts at every domestic and religious ritual. This is the first object which is consecrated before commencing any important ritual. These *Mangala-ghatas* greet the eyes on Hindu New Year Days at all shop-fronts in North India. The only difference between the *Bhadra-Kalasa* of Vedic times and the present-day *Mangala-ghata* is in its content. *Amrita* (ambrosia) or *ghrita* (clarified butter) was stored in *Bhadra-Kalasa*, *Purna-Kalasa* etc. by the Vedic Aryans.<sup>17</sup> Nowadays people substitute it with holy water. Auspicious flowers and leaves cover the *Mangala-ghata* today. When a bunch of lotus flowers is inserted into the vase with their stalks, the petals naturally cover the base. A *Mangala-ghata* with the lotus flowers in it is called the *Padma-Kosa*. The primeval lotus arose from the depth of the infinite ocean impelled by the irresistible power of energising time (*Sa padma-kosah sahasodatishtad kalena karma prati bodhanena*).<sup>18</sup> This self-born (*atma-yoni*) lotus filled the universal waters with its radiance. It typified the *Loka Padma*, i.e., manifestation of the cosmos as Lotus. The reference to waters here is to the ultimate cause or source of creation which is symbolised as the water of life within the *Purna-ghata* from which sprouts the lotus as the creative seed. This is the same pot (*Padma-Kosa*) which finds support to Brahma (*atmayoni syambhu abja prishthadhishtita*) who creates the *Loka-tattva* (the Essence of the Worlds) in a beautiful form. The *Loka-tattva* was created out of the *Loka-Padma*. Moreover, the Puranas describe the world as a four-petalled lotus.<sup>19</sup>

The *Purna-ghata* with the *Padma-Kosa* symbol is the complete exemplar of *Loka-Padma*, i.e., the cosmos as Lotus. In short, *Purna-ghata* was the symbol of Mother-Earth and its consecration was simply a fertility rite. The overflowing foliage, covering the vase, was the sign of the luxuriance of life being

produced by germinal sources. The mystic symbolism behind the *Purna-ghata* with *Padma-Kosa* is too elaborate and modifications consequent on its translation into stone leave no room for exhibition of the vase as such. The *Kalasa-Amlaka* on the Sikhara of the Hindu temples is a continuation of the *Purna-ghata* motif. The Mauryan master-craftsmen used this *Purna-ghata* motif at Sanchi, Bharhut and other places. This motif has been borrowed by Islamic, Greek, Gothic and other architects. Thus the unseen in our National Emblem tells more about Indian culture!

The lotus-vase is thus the symbol of the First of the Four Great Miracles of Buddhism, i.e., the Nativity of the Buddha. To emphasise the miraculous character of Buddha's last reincarnation (i.e., Gautama Buddha), it is written that he alighted on a lotus and that a lotus sprang up at each of his first seven steps.<sup>20</sup>

Above the *Purna-ghata* is the circular abacus on which are sculptured in bas-relief the figures of an elephant, (facing south), a horse (facing north), a humped bull (facing west) and a lion (facing east), each separated by a *chakra* or a smaller wheel of 24 spokes. Out of them one wheel together with the horse and bull has been adopted for our National Emblem. As the wheel in the centre is the replica of the *Dharma-Chakra*, we shall not describe its symbolism here, but later. The small lion is but a miniature of his four big brothers who require closer study. That the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains accepted these animals as auspicious is evident from a reference to them in the *Jivabhigamasutra*. It was the practice of the ancient Indians to divide the Earth into four *dvipas* (islands) and place an animal in front of each of them. The four animals on the abacus may represent the gods Surya (horse), Indra (elephant), Siva (bull) and the goddess Durga (lion) and their subordination to the Buddha and his *dharma*. Another Buddhist interpretation is that the drum with its four animals and *chakras* represent the Anotatta or Anavatapta Lake, one of the sacred lakes of their canon in which the Buddha had his bath. This lake is described in Buddhist texts as having four mouths guarded by a horse, a dragon, a bull and an elephant. The surmise that these four animals symbolise the four directions or the four corners of the world finds some support from the discovery of

their metallic figures buried at the four quarters around a *stupa*.

As we are making an attempt to explain the symbolism of Asoka's Lion Capital, which we take to be a Buddhist monument, we shall confine ourselves to giving an interpretation of the animals found on it in consonance with Buddhist philosophy. In Buddhist symbolism the elephant represents Conception, the bull the Nativity of the Buddha, the horse the Great Departure and the lion, the great Buddha himself, the Lion of the Sakhyas.

2. *Elephant*: Siddhartha was born as the son of King Sudhodana of Kapilavastu and his queen Maha Maya. Maya Devi had a dream in which she saw the divine Bodhisattva enter her womb in the form of a white elephant. The elephant is associated with the fertility cult in India and this is perhaps the reason why she dreamt of a white elephant entering her womb when she conceived. When the queen spoke of her dream to the King, he summoned the soothsayers to interpret it. They declared that she had conceived a son who was destined to be either a Chakravartin (Universal Monarch) or a Buddha (Enlightened One).

The elephant which is not included in our National Emblem is thus the symbol of Conception of the Buddha. "In all written versions from the Pali to the Chinese, including the Sodian and Tibetan, and on all the Indian and Serindian representations the thoughtless gift which brought about the exile of the prince of charity is that of an elephant".<sup>21</sup> "The Bodhisattva in the form of an elephant caught by a giant crab while drinking water in a lake is mentioned in the Karkataka Jataka and this is well illustrated in a Bharhut relief. Thus, the elephant has a place in Buddhism.

The Siamese believe that a white elephant has the soul of a Buddha. When a white elephant is taken in that country, the capturer was rewarded, and the animal brought to the King to be kept ever afterwards, for it could not be bought or sold. It was baptised and feted and when it died it was mourned for like a human being.<sup>22</sup>

3. *The bull*:<sup>23</sup> The presence of the bull on the abacus of Lion Capital, Sarnath, indicates the zodiacal constellation at

the time of the birth of Prince Siddhartha (*Vrishabha lagna*—sign of the Taurus).

The antiquity of the bull in India is traceable to the Indus Valley Civilisation. The dominance of the bull among the steatite seals and terracotta statuettes is what distinguishes the Indus culture from that of the Vedic Aryans. The bulls thus depicted are of two general types: the aurochs and the humped Brahma bulls. The aurochs are generally shown in profile with only one horn. "This fact has led certain writers to designate the creature wrongly as a 'unicorn' in spite of the fact that profiling of this nature was a common artistic technique throughout Mesopotamian history".<sup>24</sup> The bull-god is shown three-faced and horned in several clay seals from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. He, sitting in a *yogic* posture with legs bent and soles together, was the prototype of Siva.

Rudra, the Aryan bull-god, is a combination of Dyaus, Parjanya, Indra, and Agni. With the synthesis of the Harappan bull-god, he became Siva of modern Hinduism. Nandi, his vehicle, is represented in all his temples. In Hindu mythology the bull is sometimes taken to represent Justice or Virtue (*vrisho hi bhagavan Dharmo*).<sup>25</sup>

The Rig Vedic Parjanya<sup>26</sup> is represented as a son of Dyaus and equated with Indra. He formed the 'germ of life' in cows, mares, plants and women. Prithivi (the earth) is described as his wife/mother.<sup>27</sup> Indra's birth is described in the Rig Veda in this way: "His mother, a cow, bore Indra, an unlicked calf". He was represented as a mighty bull, splendid bull, terrible bull, the bull with a thousand horns; indeed, as "bull of bulls". Agni is also identified with bull as "roaring like a bull".

The Rig Veda speaks of Aghnya, the indestructible bull. The bull represents the eternal *Dharma* on whose head the mystic *Chakra* of the Asvins is concealed.<sup>28</sup> The Satapatha Brahmana says the bull is the Prajapati and originated from Indra's mouth.<sup>29</sup> The bull is the sacrificial fee for Poshan's *trishamyukta*, Soma's Maruts and Vaisvanara.<sup>30</sup> There are elaborate rules for 'setting the bull at liberty' in the Grihya Sutras.<sup>31</sup> The bull sacrifice is next in importance to horse-sacrifice, for "Asva-medha is the bull among sacrifices; and inasmuch as the bull has an excrescence (hump)".<sup>32</sup> Thus, we arrive at the humped bull, which finds its representation on the Lion Capital.

4. *The Horse*: The horse has commanded the respect of the people of India since the Vedic times, if not earlier. It is a solar animal, for the Sun-God is depicted as riding on his seven radiant horses. The horse, born from the body of the Agni-Prajapati<sup>33</sup> (i.e., the Sun) desired, "May this (body) of mine be sacrificially pure: may I thereby be possessed of a self. Thereupon the horse (*asva*) was produced; and because that which was swelling (*asvat*) became pure (*medhya*); therefore the name Asvamedha". The horse is represented as having originated immediately after the Brahman and Agni, directly from the egg produced by Prajapati from the cosmic waters; but according to other accounts, the horse originated from Prajapati's eye.<sup>34</sup> Thus, sea is its kin and birth place; hence its connection with Varuna is implicit.

The concept of horse finds no better expression than in the following *brahmana* of the Satapatha Brahmana. "1. Verily, the dawn is the head of the sacrificial horse,<sup>35</sup> the sun, its eyes, the wind its breath, Agni Vaisvanara (the fire belonging to all men) its open mouth. The year is the body of the sacrificial horse, the sky its back, the air its belly, the earth the under part of its belly, the quarters its flanks. . . The day, indeed, was produced as the Mahiman (cup) before the horse, and its birth-place is in the eastern sea. The night was produced as the Mahiman (cup) behind (or after) it, and its birth-place was in the western sea: these two Mahiman (cups), indeed, came to be on both sides of the horse. As Haya (steed) it carried the gods, as Vajin (racer) the Gandharvas, as Arvan (courser) the Asuras, as Asva (horse) men. The sea, indeed, is its kindred, the sea its birth-place".<sup>36</sup>

The horse-sacrifice (Asvamedha) is associated in popular mind with victory and the Satapatha Brahmana seems to confirm it. "(The Adhvaryu and Sacrificer whisper in the right ear of the horse) 'Plenteous by the mother, strengthful by the father',—its mother, doubtless, is this (earth), and its father yonder (sky): it is to these two he commits it;—'a horse thou art, a steed thou art',—he thereby instructs it, whence clever subjects (or children) are born to him;—'a courser (*atya*) thou art, a charger thou art',—he therewith leads it beyond (*ati*), whence the horse goes beyond (surpasses) other animals, and whence the horse attains to pre-eminence among animals;—'a runner thou

art, a racer thou art, a prize-winner thou art',—in accordance with the text is (the meaning of) this;—'a male thou art, well-disposed towards man thou art',—this is with a view to its (or, his) being supplied with a mate;—'Speedy thou art called, Child thou art called',—this is the horse's favourite name: by its favourite name he thus addresses it: whence even if two enemies, on meeting together, address one another by name, they get on amicably together".<sup>37</sup>

The horse is the highest of animals and ranks next to man.<sup>38</sup> Horse sacrifice was therefore the most meritorious and highest of such acts. The connection of the sacrificial horse with 'the lord of creature' is, of course, fully accounted for by the theory of the identity of the sacrifice generally with Purusha-Prajapati. The sacrificial horse accordingly belongs to Prajapati. The symbolism of the horse in Buddhist texts does not differ much from the one found in the Vedic literature which we have described above.

Apart from this, several early Buddhist texts (Mahasudassana Sutta, Mahapadana Sutta, Ambatta Sutta, Chakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta etc.) describe the Chakkavatti (= Chakravarti, universal monarch) as the possessor of Assaratana (the Treasure of the Horse) among the seven precious things. The horse is intimately connected with Buddhism as Prince Siddhartha left his palace riding his favourite white horse Kanthaka at the dead of night. This event, the second Miracle, is called the Great Departure (*Mahabhinishkramana*) or Renunciation.

5. *The lion*:<sup>39</sup> The four addorsed lions on the abacus cannot but evoke the greatest admiration, for this unique masterpiece of sculpture has earned its name, the Lion Capital, on account of their life-like appearance. The swelling veins, and the muscular development of the lions have been so cleverly transferred into stone that the beholder will have the feeling of being in the midst of Nature. Even a picture of these lions commands a feeling of awe in the breast of everyone who sees it. The master-sculptor has presented us the lions in all their nobility, regal dignity and imperial majesty. The virility, strength, fierceness and ferociousness have been delineated on the stone with utmost care and precision. Their orientation facing the four cardinal points points to a four-fold differentiation, but governed by a formal as well as a basic unity of the great power, force or energy called



*Chesthta, Sthama, Bala*, which crowns the whole cosmos as the principle of Might or Fear that controls and governs everything. The seating of the lions back to back signifies that their power is derived from one and the same source which is their axis. This centre of power is the *Dharma-chakra*, the Great Wheel of Law, which they are carrying on their heads and the smaller wheels which in turn give them support. The lion, the supreme ruler of the forest, is governed by the *Dharma* in his actions from above and from below.

The lions on the Sarnath Capital represent the Buddha as he is often compared with that noble animal and his preaching with *Simhanada* (the roar of lion) in several early Buddhist texts. He was called the *Sakya Simha* (Lion of the Sakya race) and the lions on the Capital as well as the other animals on the abacus proclaim the fourfold Truth as announced by the Enlightened One. In the context of *Simhasana* (lion-throne) of a Chakravartin (universal monarch), the lions represent his temporal power extending upto the ends of the earth in the four cardinal points.

The Asokan architect has expressed in visible and graphic terms the fundamental truth of the superiority of the Spiritual to the Material, of the Moral to the Physical, of Soul to Sense, of Right to Might, by making the four lions carry by their joint strength on their shoulders the burden of the Great Wheel.<sup>43</sup> The lions are the symbols of physical strength, or brute force or violence, but they are made to carry the burden of the Wheel as the symbol of the spiritual. It is the weight of *Dharma* that the four lions are made to carry to signify the superiority of Right to Might.

6. *Dharma-chakra*: The Lion Capital at Sarnath was originally topped by a *Dharma-chakra*. This giant Wheel had presumably 32 spokes or radii as four fragments of which have been recovered. The ends of 13 spokes remain on these broken pieces. The Wheel was fixed with a tenon into a mortise hole in the centre of the top between the lion-heads, its diameter above being 8 inches and at bottom 6.75 inches and depth 3.5 to 4 inches.

The Great Wheel which the four lions originally supported as well as the four smaller ones with 24 spokes each on the abacus, depict the "Turning of the Wheel" by the Buddha. The

*Lalita Vistara* says: "Thus the Wheel of the Law of twelve forms has been set in motion and has been understood by Kaundinya, and the three Jewels have sprung up. The Buddha, the Law, and the Community, these are the three Jewels; carried from one to the other, the word has reached the abode of the city of Brahma. It has been turned—the spotless Wheel of the Law—by the Lord of the World, the Saviour, and there have come forth the three jewels very hard to attain in this world".<sup>41</sup>

It was at Sarnath that the Buddha preached his First Sermon, which is appropriately called the "Turning of the Wheel of the Law" (*Dharma-chakra-pravartana*). The 'Dhamma-chakka-ppavattana' Sutta<sup>42</sup> says: "In Benares, at the hermitage of Migadava, the Supreme Wheel of the empire of Truth has been set rolling by the Blessed One—that which not by any Saman or Brahman, not by any god, not by any Brahma or Mara, not by any one in the universe, can ever be turned back!" The guardian angel of the four quarters of the globe, announced the news of the Buddha's preaching of the First Sermon. "And thus, in an instant, a second, a moment, the sound went up even to world of Brahma, and this great ten-thousand-world-system quaked and trembled and was shaken violently, and an immeasurable bright light appeared in the universe beyond even the power of the gods!"

The term *Chakra* in Buddhist literature means dominion or circle of authority. That is why it is associated with a Chakravartin (Wheel-turner) and by implication the ruler who conducts himself (and whose subjects therefore conduct themselves) according to the Law of the Wheel. Chakravartin, therefore, means the righteous king or overlord. The 'Chakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta' and several other early Buddhist texts describe such a ruler as the possessor of seven precious things amongst which the Chakkaratana ("the Treasure of the Wheel") is the foremost. This Wheel is not the paternal inheritance of any king, for it stays with him only as long as he discharges his 'Aryan duty'.

What is the 'Aryan duty' of a Wheel-turning Monarch?<sup>43</sup> "This, dear son, that thou leaning on the Norm (the Law of truth and righteousness), honouring, respecting, and revering it, doing homage to it, hallowing it, being thyself a Norm-banner, a Norm-signal, having the Norm as thy master, shouldst pro-

vide the right watch, ward, and protection for thine own folk, for the army, for the nobles, for vassals, for brahmins, and householders, for town and country dwellers, for the religious world, and for beasts and birds. Throughout thy kingdom let no wrong-doing prevail. And whosoever in thy kingdom is poor, to him let wealth be given.

"And when, dear son, in thy kingdom men of religious life, renouncing the carelessness arising from the intoxication of the senses, and devoted to forbearance and sympathy, each mastering self, each calming self, each perfecting self, shall come to thee from time to time, and question thee concerning what is good and what is bad, what is criminal and what is not, what is to be done and what left undone, what line of action will in the long run work for weal or for woe, thou shouldst hear what they have to say, and thou shouldst deter them from evil, and bid them take up what is good. This, dear son, is the Aryan duty of a sovran of the world".

A righteous king conquers the whole world with the *Dharma-chakra*. He has simply to tell the Wheel: "Roll onward, O my lord the Wheel, O my Lord, go forth and overcome". Then the Wondrous Wheel moves toward the East, South, West, and North, one after the other, and conquers the whole globe. The rival kings in different regions welcome the monarch who sets the Wheel in motion and submit to him saying: "Welcome, O mighty king! All is thine, O mighty king! Do thou, O mighty king, be a Teacher to us". The Wheel-turning monarch does not annex their kingdoms, but leave them to themselves, with the following six commandments: "Ye shall slay no living thing. Ye shall not take that which has not been given. Ye shall not act wrongly touching the bodily desires. Ye shall speak no lie. Ye shall drink no maddening drink. And yet may still enjoy such privileges as ye have had of yore".<sup>44</sup> The Wheel returns to the righteous king who sets it in motion and remains in his possession so long as he is discharging his duties. The Wheel disappears from his possession on his death or abdication. Should the successor carry on the Laws of the Wheel, it will reappear and act as before, and this may continue for generations. But, should any successor fail in his righteous rule, then the country will fall gradually into utter ruin, and remain so for generations till the Law of the Wheel has been revived. Then only will the

Wheel reappear and with it wealth and power and the happiness of the people.

The Buddhist concept of the *Dharma-chakra*, as explained in the 'Dhamma-chakka-ppavattana' and the 'Chakkavatti-Sihanada' Suttas of the Pali canon is unique in the annals of Indian culture. This concept of the *Dharma-chakra* is no borrowal from ancient Indian tradition.

The concept of Chakra<sup>45</sup> is very ancient in India, but the wondrous wheel of the Buddhist scriptures is not really a chariot wheel, as it is a single disk. The comparison of the *Dharma-chakra* with the solar disk is irrelevant. The various Chakras known to the ancient Indian thought have no ethical significance as that of the *Dharma-chakra* of Buddhist canon. The Sudarshana Chakra of Vishnu, misconceived as the acme of destruction by the ignorant, was really a cosmic circle of all-embracing love (*akhandamandalakaram vyaptam yena chara charam*—The Cosmic circle within the limitless circuit of which is embraced all that is animate and inanimate).<sup>46</sup> The Maha Chakra (Great Wheel—Sun), Sri Chakra, Kala Chakra (the revolving Wheel of Time), Samsara Chakra, Bhava Chakra (Human Life), Brahma Chakra (Wheel of Creation), Brahmanda Chakra (Cosmos), Jyotis Chakra, Rajya Chakra, Karma Chakra (flux of men's actions) and other wheels mentioned in the Upanishads and epics are interesting concepts.<sup>47</sup> The Buddhist Bhava and Samsara Chakra<sup>48</sup> are, no doubt, borrowals from Indian tradition.

A discussion on the origin of the Wheel in Indian culture and its symbolism in Indian thought is out of context here as the Great *Dharma-chakra* and the smaller ones on Sarnath Lion Capital are but lithic representations of the Buddhist concept as explained in the 'Dhamma-chakka-ppavattana' and 'Chakkavatti-Sihanada' Suttas. The *Dharma-chakra* of the Lion Capital is a unique Wheel and it does not stand comparison even with the other wheels mentioned in the Buddhist texts. The Sarnath column with the Lion Capital is a Buddhist monument and an interpretation of its symbolism in the context of Brahmanical tradition will be a relegation of the ideals of Asoka the Great, who built it.

"The spokes of the wheel are the rules of pure conduct, justice is the uniformity of their length, wisdom the tire; modesty

and thoughtfulness are the hub in which the immovable axle of truth is fixed", thus preached Lord Buddha in his Sermon at Benares.

Though it is not possible to explain the significance of the 32 spokes which the Great Wheel probably had, the 24 spokes of the smaller wheels seem to stand for the Buddha's (I) *Four Great Miracles*—(1) Conception, (2) Renunciation, (3) Enlightenment, and (4) Great Disease, (II), *Four Noble Truths* propounded by him, i.e., (5) Misery (*Duhkha*), (6) its cause (*Samudaya*), (7) Thirst or Attachment (*Trishna*), and (8) and their Suppression (*Nirodha*), (III), *Five Primary Principles of Morality*—(9) Truth, (10) Non-Injury, (11) Non-Stealing, (12) Purity, and (13), Non-Possession, (IV) *Eight-Fold Path*—(14) Right Thought, (15) Right View, (16) Right Speech, (17) Right Action, (16) Right living, (17) Right Exertion, (18) Right Recollection, (19) Right Meditation and other tenets (20-24?), as the Great Wheel itself symbolises the 'Turning of the Wheel' (i.e., First Sermon). Perhaps the spokes of the Wheel correspond to the many rules of conduct stipulated by Buddha's teachings and also symbolise the rays of sacred light emanating from the Master. The Great Wheel, *Dharma-chakra*, was an ideal, difficult to be possessed by anyone but an Enlightened One, as there is no evidence of any other historical personage having possessed it.

#### *Message of Sarnath*

There is no room for doubt that Asoka the Great erected the column at Sarnath where the Buddha preached his First Sermon. The Great King has inscribed on his Topra Pillar (now at Delhi) that "I have set up pillars bearing records relating to Dharma". Hiuen-tsang who visited the site in the 7th century has stated that the pillar was built by 'Asoka-rajā'. The Sarnath inscription of Kumaradevi<sup>49</sup> has recorded that she restored 'the Lord of the Turning of the Wheel (*Dharma Chakra Jina*) in accordance with the way in which he existed in the days of Dharmasoka, the ruler of men'. The message of Sarnath Lion Capital is purely Buddhist. The Pillar or Stupa in Buddhism is associated with the Great Disease of the Lord. The *Purnaghata* with the turned down lotus petals and flowers is an iconographical representation of the great miracle of the Buddha, i.e.,

his Nativity. This symbolism is further strengthened by the presence of the bull on the Capital, his zodiacal sign. The four animals on the abacus represent the four-fold Truth propounded by the Buddha. The addorsed lions represent the *Sakya Simha*, the lion of the Sakya race. The smaller *Chakras* as well as the Great Wheel which the lions originally carried on their back symbolised the First Miracle of the Buddha, i.e., the Turning of the Wheel or the preaching of the First Sermon at the Sarnath Park, which inaugurated universal sovereignty of the Master. The Wheel-turning monarch, as explained in the 'Chakkavatti-Sihanada' Sutta is none other than the Buddha himself, as no mortal king can possess such a *Dharma-chakra*. The Asokan column at Sarnath is the best symbol of the concepts of Buddha's Nativity, Departure, Enlightenment, and Great Disease. Early Buddhist sculptors explained the Four Great Miracles of Buddhism by symbols and the Sarnath Lion Capital is the best example of it. None but Asoka the Great had the grand vision to transfer such immortal concepts into stone with perfect spiritual charm. Asoka's rule was the most glorious period in Indian History and his Lion Capital which we adopted as our National Emblem when we became a Republic is a source of inspiration for all of us.

### SATYAM EVA JAYATE

In our National Emblem, adopted by the Government of India on January 26, 1950, only the three lions are visible, the fourth one being hidden from view. The Wheel appears in relief in the centre of the abacus with a bull on the right and a horse on the left and the outlines of the other wheels on the extreme right and left. The words "Satyam eva Jayate" are inscribed below the Emblem in the Devanagari script.

The legend *Satyam eva Jayate* means 'Truth alone triumphs'. These three words are the opening words found in the *Mundaka Upanishad* (III. 1.6), the text of which reads: "Satyam eva Jayate nanritam, satyena patha vitato deva-yanah yenakramanty risayo hy aptakamayatra tat satyasya paramam nidhanam" (Truth alone conquers, not untruth. By truth is laid out the path leading to the gods by which the sages who have their desires fulfilled travel to where is that supreme abode of truth).<sup>50</sup>

The *Mundaka Upanishad* belongs to the Atharva Veda and has three chapters, each of which has two sections. The name is derived from the root *mund*, 'to shave', as he that comprehends the teaching of the Upanishads is shaved or liberated from error and ignorance. The Upanishad states clearly the distinction between the higher knowledge of the Supreme Brahman and the lower knowledge of the empirical world. It is by this higher wisdom and not by sacrifices or worship that one can reach Brahman. Only the Sanyasin who has given up everything can obtain the highest knowledge.

A hundred years ago, Rajendralal Mitra, the great Orientalist, used the words "Satyam eva Jayati nanritam" as his personal motto.<sup>51</sup> Dr. Rajendralal was a true nationalist and was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the second session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in the year 1886. In the course of his welcome address delivered on 27th December 1886, he said: "It has been the dream of my life that the scattered units of my race may some day coalesce and come together; that instead of living merely as individuals, we may some day so combine as to be able to live as a Nation. In this meeting, I behold the commencement of such coalescence, I behold in this Congress the dawn of a better and happier day for India"<sup>52</sup> . . .

The legend in our National Emblem is limited to the first three words of the verse in the *Mundaka Upanishad*. The fourth word (*nanritam*) which Dr. Rajendralal had included in his personal motto, was omitted by the Government as it was perhaps thought to be redundant. There is also the grammatical difference, for Dr. Rajendralal had "Satyam eva Jayati . . .". As the legend has now become part of our National Emblem, no individual can any longer use it. It has become part and parcel of our Emblem. The omission of the legend in our National Emblem on coins, service stamps etc. does not make it infructuous. The Asokan Lion Capital on currency notes and other documents was used even before the National Emblem was adopted. The legend found no place in our National Emblem between August 15, 1947 and January 26, 1950, as it was not then adopted. "As the result of the constitutional changes, it became necessary to replace the King's portrait on the notes, etc. with some emblem and the adoption of the crest of the

Asoka Pillar was approved for the purpose. It was only incidental that the same crest of the Asokan pillar with the motto was later approved as the State Emblem of the Government of India".<sup>53</sup>

*The Usage*<sup>45</sup>

1. The National Emblem can be used for Governmental purposes only, that is, for official purposes of the Government of India and the State Governments. Rules provide that the Asokan Capital motif can be used for their official seals only by

- (1) The President,
- (2) Ministers and Ministries of the Central Government,
- (3) Diplomatic Missions abroad,
- (4) Governors of States and Chief Commissioner, and
- (5) Ministers and Departments of the State Governments.

2. Statutory bodies are not permitted to use the National Emblem. They can adopt distinct crests of their own for their use.

3. The stationery for *demi-official* use by the Ministers bear the National Emblem in blue, whereas similar stationery for use by officers bears the Emblem in red. A few specified officers, who have to correspond with foreign Governments, have also been permitted to use stationery carrying the Emblem printed in blue.

4. The stationery used by Ministers and officers should not carry the name of the concerned dignitary or officer.

5. The Members of Parliament can also use stationery bearing the National Emblem. The colour prescribed for Members of the Lok Sabha is green and for Members of the Rajya Sabha red.

6. The Government of India has laid down two designs of the National Emblem. One design is for reproduction in small sizes, e.g., for use in *demi-official* stationery, seals, and die-printing. Reproduction of the National Emblem must conform strictly to the prescribed designs.

7. The Government permits the use of the National Emblem on :

1. Government publications,
2. films produced by the Films Division of the Government of India.



3. crockery and cutlery used by Indian Missions abroad, and
4. items of uniform of Class IV staff of Indian Missions abroad.
8. The National Emblem can be used on Government House, vehicles, i.e., the vehicles of Rashtrapati Bhavan at the Centre and of Raj Bhavans in the States.
9. The triangular metal plaques incorporating Asoka Chakra (which is a part of the National Emblem) can be used on the cars of Ministers (except Deputy Ministers).
10. The National Emblem is displayed only on very important buildings like the Secretariat, Parliament House, etc.
11. Unauthorised persons and bodies are not permitted to use the National Emblem for any purpose. Sports bodies and associations are not permitted to use the National Emblem either on their stationery or on the blazers of the players. This applies to sports bodies of Ministries and other offices of the Government as sports activities cannot be interpreted as including Government purpose.
12. The Emblem and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950, prohibits the use of the National Emblem for trade, business, calling or profession. Persons using the National Emblem for such purposes, without previous permission of the Government of India, are liable to be prosecuted. (An up-to-date copy of the Act may be consulted for detailed information).



## CHAKRA-DHVAJA—OUR NATIONAL FLAG

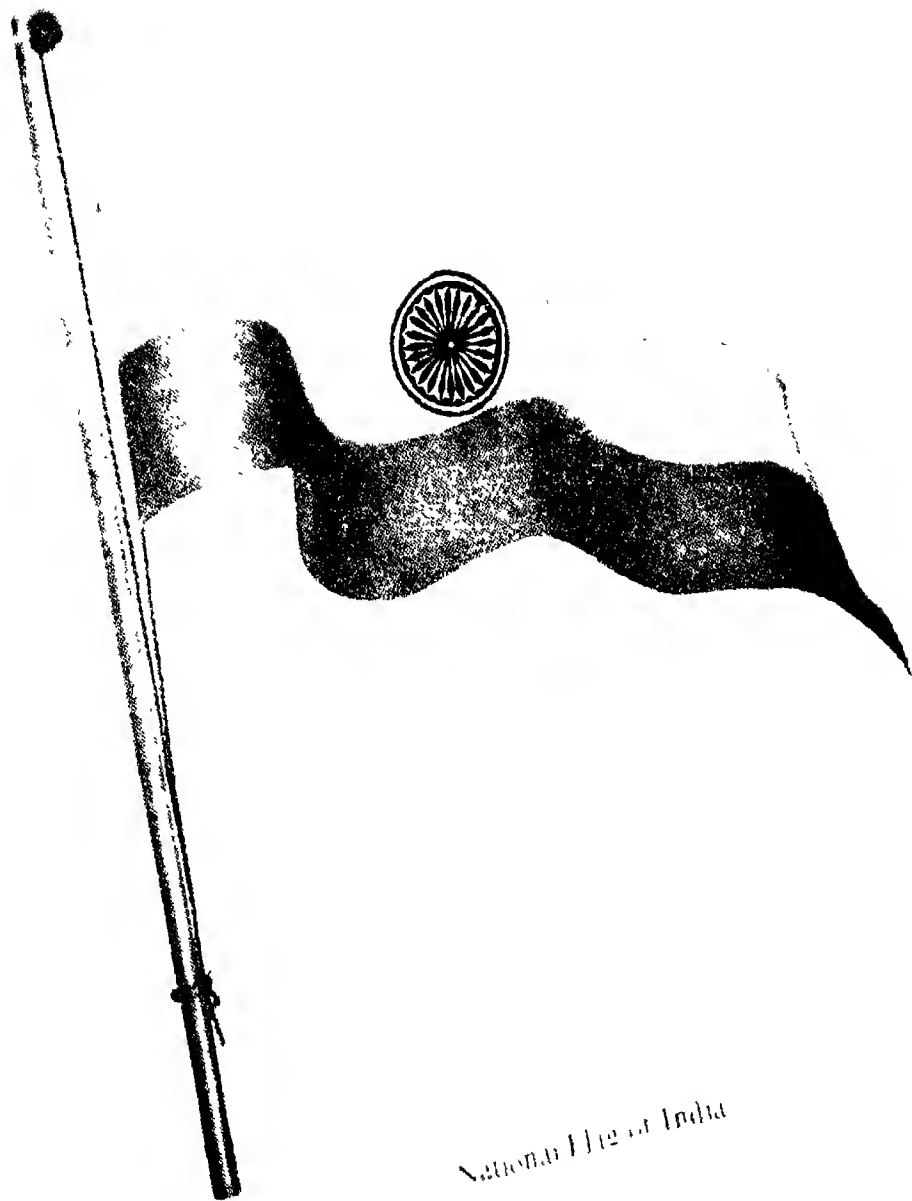
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, presenting a tri-colour flag to the Constituent Assembly on Tuesday, 22nd July, 1947, for its adoption as the National Flag of India, said: "We thought of a design for a Flag which was beautiful, because the symbol of a nation must be beautiful to look at. We thought of a Flag which would in its combination and in its separate parts would somehow represent the spirit of the nation, the tradition of the nation, that mixed spirit and tradition which has grown up through thousands of years in India. So we devised this Flag".<sup>1</sup>

Pandit Nehru added: "It is a very beautiful Flag to look at purely from the point of artistry, and it has come to symbolise many other beautiful things, things of the spirit, things of the mind, that gave value to the individual's life and to the national life, for a nation does not live merely by material things, although they are highly important".<sup>2</sup>

As was explained by Pandit Govind Malaviya in the Constituent Assembly, "the importance of a national flag does not depend on its colour, its bands or its other parts. The flag as a whole is important and other things—the colours, etc. that it contains—are immaterial. The flag may be a piece of white cloth or of any other insignificant material but when it is accepted as a National Flag, it becomes the emblem of national self-respect. It becomes an expression of the sense of freedom of a nation. It becomes its dearest object".<sup>3</sup>

The Indian National Flag is indeed a "very happy and singularly well-conceived symbol with its harmony of colours".<sup>4</sup> No other national flag in the world is a match to the National Flag of India in its beauty, simplicity, and deep symbolism. Indeed the genius of India has found its full expression in our National Flag.

Does the tri-colour *Chakra-Dhvaja* National Flag of India symbolise the spirit of the nation, traditions of the nation, that mixed spirit and tradition which has grown up through thousands of years in India? We shall make an endeavour, in this



National Flag of India



Chapter, to explain the symbolism of our National Flag and its different parts.

## I. FLAGS IN ANCIENT INDIA

Flags and banners were not unknown in ancient India, but the concept of a national or common flag for Bharatvarsha, as such, was absent on account of the division of the country into numerous Janapadas or nationalities. *Dhvaja* was the word used for the flag and *ketu*, for a banner, in our ancient literature. The Rig Veda<sup>5</sup> makes two references to *dhvajās*, both in plural. War banners were designated *ketu*<sup>6</sup> in the Vedas. *Dhvaja* was the common flag of a dynasty and the generals had their own individual banners or *ketus*. The Atharva Veda makes a reference to a flag with the device of the Surya (Sun-god) and this was the common standard of the Aryans.<sup>7</sup>

Hindu gods like Siva (bull), Vishnu (Garuda), Indra (sword), Kama (fish) and others too had their own flags (mentioned in the brackets). The epic and Puranic heroes like Arjuna (Hanuman), Asvatthama (lion's tail), Bhimasena (lion), Bhishma (palmyra), Bhurishravas (Yupa pillar), Drona (*Kamandalu* — drinking pot), Duryodhana (serpent), Jayadratha (boar), Karna (golden colour), Salva (ploughshare), Yudhishthira (moon) and others had their own particular banners (given in brackets) to distinguish their divisions from the others. A full chapter is devoted to the description of flags of the Kurus and the Pandavas in the Mahabharata.<sup>8</sup>

The Imperial Mauryas to which Asoka the Great belonged had probably the peacock as their national emblem as it was their totemistic bird.<sup>9</sup> The offshoots of the Imperial Mauryas in Tamralipti and Burma had the peacock as their national emblem.<sup>10</sup> The Imperial Guptas had Garuda as their standard and every division (*vyuha*) of their army separate banners.<sup>11</sup> The Pandyas had fish as their emblem, and the Chalukyas, the *Varaha* or boar. The Marathas had their Jaripatka flag and *Bhagava Zenda* (banner). The Rajput chieftains had saffron-coloured flags.<sup>12</sup>

Specifications are given in the Pancharatragama texts for standards of temples.<sup>13</sup> References to codes of flag are also found in our various treatises such as Kalpataru, Hemachandra, Kriyasar,

Suta-Samhita, Pratishta Sara Sangraha, Hayashirshya Panch Ratri Grantha, etc.<sup>14</sup>

The concept of a national flag was not altogether lacking in India during the British regime. The last Mogul Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar could rally round his Green Flag the whole of North India in 1857. The princely states in India were allowed to fly their own flags in their territories by the British Government. Though colonies smaller in size than India were allowed to use their own standards, the British Government did not allow India to fly its own national flag.

## II. BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL FLAG

The idea of a national flag for India finds its first expression in 1883 when the book, *Indian National Songs and Lyrics*, was published by N. R. Nund, Manager, National Book Society, Lahore. Srish Chandra Basu of Panini Office was the author of this book. This book contained on its title/cover page a flag with Sun emblem as "Our National Standard".<sup>15</sup> The idea of a national flag for India did not take deep roots in Indian mind as there was no all-India political organisation to educate the masses. It took two years more for the birth of the Indian National Congress. The Indian National Congress did not have any clear conception about Independence during the pre-Gandhian days. The endeavours made by Burjorji Nowrosji, the Editor of the *Hindi Punch*, in suggesting designs for a national flag in his ingenious cartoons on Indian National Congress were futile.<sup>16</sup>

The birth of the national flag, and *Bande Mataram* as our national song was the result of a great mass upsurge.

The necessity of a national flag for India was felt by the revolutionaries in the wake of the Partition of Bengal in 1905. This gross mistake committed by Lord Curzon gave the first spark to militant nationalism and Bengal gave the leadership to the rest of India. Swaraj was not the goal of the Indian National Congress till then. Swadeshi movement was started in the wake of the Partition of Bengal. The birth of a national flag must also have taken place in the wake of this mighty upsurge.

**LOTUS FLAG:** There was no ancient flag of India which the leaders who initiated the Swadeshi movement in Bengal in the wake of the Partition of Bengal could have revived. The

first national flag was hoisted by the people of Calcutta at Parsi Bagan Square (= Greer Park, *renamed* Sadhana Sarkar Udyan) at 294/2, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Road, on August 7, 1905.<sup>17</sup> This was a tri-colour flag; the colours being red, yellow, and green, in that order. The red band at the top had eight white lotuses in a row. The yellow band in the middle had *Bande Mataram* inscribed in the Devanagari script, embedded in blue. The green band at the bottom had the shining sun on the left and a crescent moon and a star on the right.<sup>18</sup> It is not known who designed this flag or who hoisted it.

**SAPTARSHI FLAG:** A flag of India, for the first time, was hoisted outside this country, at Stuttgart, on 22nd August 1907 by Madame Bhicaji Rustam Cama.<sup>19</sup> This flag was called Saptarshi Flag as it had red, saffron and green bands. A lotus and seven stars were to be seen on the red stripe at the top, followed by *Bande Mataram* in Sanskrit in the saffron-yellow band in the middle. The green band at the bottom contained the sun on the left with a crescent moon and a star on the right. This Saptarshi flag was hoisted by Madame Cama on the fourth day of the 12th International Socialists' Congress held at Stuttgart, i.e., August 22, 1907. A few words about this Parsi lady will not be out of place here.

Madame Cama, daughter of Sorabji Patel and his wife Jeejibai of Bombay, was living in exile in Paris. The flag was said to have been designed by her in 1905. She carried the flag secretly and showed it to her Indian and German friends in Berlin in 1905 (?). Madame Cama's flag differed from the one hoisted in Calcutta in 1905 slightly as she had replaced the lotuses by Saptarshi (seven stars). That she took the cue from the Calcutta flag is evident from the colour-scheme as well as the symbols used. The cry of *Bande Mataram* was raised, for the first time, on August 7, 1905 and Madame Cama must have come to know of the political significance of the slogan from reports or otherwise. She exhibited the same flag while addressing a meeting of the Indian Society at London on February 20, 1909 and told the audience that she was in the habit of speaking under that flag. It was hung over her head on the wall.

**THUNDER-BOLT FLAG:** Sister Nivedita had given the idea of a national flag in which the Thunder-bolt and the Lotus were



included to symbolise the spiritual aspirations of India. No such flag was ever hoisted.<sup>20</sup>

**HOME RULE FLAG:** Dr. Annie Besant launched the Home Rule League on September 1, 1916 and sponsored a new national flag in 1917 for India. This flag had five red and four green horizontal stripes, alternating one another, with the Union Jack at the left-hand top corner, a crescent and a star a little to its right and seven stars across the stripes. The inclusion of the Union Jack in the flag meant self-government within the British Empire and the acceptance of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. This flag was in vogue during the Home Rule days. The presence of the Union Jack made the flag unacceptable to the masses.<sup>21</sup>

**SWARAJ FLAG:** The flags designed and exhibited before 1921 did not command the respect of the masses as the freedom struggle had not entered its critical phase. The advent of Mahatma Gandhi on the political horizon of India changed the concept of freedom movement lock, stock, and barrel. He became the father figure of freedom movement and was rightly hailed as the Father of the Nation. The Mahatma gave the National Flag to India and told the people:

“A flag is a necessity for all nations. Millions have died for it. It is no doubt a kind of idolatry which it would be a sin to destroy. For a flag represents an ideal. The unfurling of the Union Jack evokes in the English breast sentiments whose strength it is difficult to measure. The Stars and Stripes mean a world to the Americans. The Star and the Crescent will call forth the best bravery in Islam.

*It will be necessary for 'us Indians—Hindus, Mahomedans, Christians, Jews, Parsis, and all others to whom India is their home—to recognise a common flag to live and die for’.*<sup>22</sup>

Gandhiji's attention to the design of a national flag was invited by an Andhra youth, Pingali Venkayya of the National College, Masulipatam. He had offered designs for an Indian national flag and placed them at every session of the Congress for four years before 1921. Lala Hansraj of Jullundar had suggested to Gandhiji that the spinning wheel should find a place in our Swaraj Flag. The All India Congress Committee was meeting at Bezwada (= Vijayawada) in March 1921 and Gan-

dhiji asked Venkayya to give him a design of a flag incorporating a spinning wheel in two stripes of red and green. Though Venkayya produced the flag within three hours, Gandhiji could not present it to the Congress Committee. This gave Gandhiji an opportunity to think it over and suggest that the background should represent a meaningful symbolism. The red colour, it was at that time thought, represented the Hindus and the green, the Muslims.<sup>20</sup>

Flags in ancient India were red, indicative of power—*Sakti*. The *Sakti* as a goddess had, red *kum kum*. The princely states of Jeypore, Vizianagaram, Travancore and Mysore had also red flags. The red had no communal significance whatsoever.

Gandhiji did not interpret the colours of the Swaraj Flag in terms of communities. "As the originator of the first design I should say that the three strips were to represent all the communities and the *Charkha* was the symbol of non-violence", he explained.<sup>21</sup> Some interpreted it as a communal flag. That Gandhiji had no such idea in mind is evident from his own observation: "The weakest numerically occupy the first place, the Islamic colour comes next, the Hindu colour red, comes last, the idea being that the strongest should act as a shield to the weakest. The white colour moreover represents purity and peace. Our national flag should mean that or nothing".<sup>25</sup> Explaining the significance of the spinning wheel, Gandhiji added: "But India as a nation can live and die only for the spinning wheel".<sup>26</sup> Gandhiji prescribed Red to symbolise blood sacrifice and Green for life and hope and White for purity and peace.

Though the tri-colour of Gandhiji was not adopted by the Indian National Congress as the national flag by a formal resolution, it began to be hoisted by the Congressmen all over India. Gandhiji gave the flag to the nation believing that the people of India had so far recovered the instinct of freedom and sacrifice as to suffer cheerfully unto death when called upon to defend it. An Indian national flag was something which the British Government could ever recognise. But the die was cast and a struggle was to ensue to defend the national flag.

### III. NAGPUR FLAG SATYAGRAHA<sup>27</sup>

Subhadra Kumari (Chauhan)<sup>28</sup> was the first to court arrest for hoisting the tri-colour national flag at Jabalpur on 18th

March 1923. She was a student at the Allahabad Government School when the Non-Cooperation Movement was launched by Gandhiji. She left the Government School and joined the Benares Theosophical School which too she left as it did not suit her. She threw her lot in the Freedom Struggle. The Congress members of the Jabalpur Municipality had resolved to present an address of welcome to Pandit Motilal Nehru who was paying a visit to their town along with members of the All India Congress Working Committee and to hoist the national flag on the Town Hall on March 18, Gandhi Day. The resolution was vetoed by the European Deputy Commissioner, appointed by the Government and this was deeply resented to by both the public and their elected civic representatives.<sup>29</sup> The Congress councillors decided to stick to their resolution and the flag was hoisted by Subhadra Kumari. The Deputy Commissioner ordered it to be pulled down and the overzealous police trampled on it. This at once touched off an indignant protest. The District Congress Committee started a Satyagraha. Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, Nathuram Mati, Pandit Sunderlal and others took out a procession with the flag in defiance of the Deputy Commissioner's order. The procession was stopped by the police and all the leaders were arrested. Pandit Sunderlal was tried and sentenced to undergo six months' rigorous imprisonment. A miniature flag which was on his person was forcibly seized against which, as a protest, he went on a fast for 72 hours while awaiting trial.

Subhadra Kumari Chauhan's patriotism and suffering drew high praise from different quarters. "...No Indian can fail to see the intensity of feeling and the courage which must lead an Indian sister to give herself up to the custody of the class from which police constables and head constables came. No greater calamity could be imagined for a Hindu or a Mussalman lady; but the wonderful revolution we are in has changed all this, and for the vindication of our right to live and move erect on the land of our birth, this frail sister of tender years has shown the way to us all", wrote C. Rajagopalachari, who was present at Jabalpur on the occasion, on March 18, 1923.<sup>30</sup>

The Nagpur Congress Committee took up the fight for the flag in its own hand and decided to make Nagpur as the centre of action. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, Gandhiji's trusted lieutenant,

took upon himself the organisation of the movement. The Satyagraha was started on April 13, the anniversary of the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy, when a procession of 36 Congress volunteers, led by M. R. Awari, started from the city and marched towards the Civil Station. As soon as the procession reached the District Court, Mr. Gowan, the District Magistrate, ordered it to be stopped. The movement was intensified on May 1, 1923, when Jamnalal Bajaj himself led the volunteers. The flag-fight gathered momentum from May 2nd when 10 volunteers offered Satyagraha daily. Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, on her release from Jabalpur, joined the Satyagraha movement at Nagpur and was arrested on May 31 for carrying the flag alone through the prohibited area.<sup>31</sup> There were repercussions of the Satyagraha movement at Nagpur in other places as well. The Holwell Monument was attempted to be 'defiled' in Calcutta on June 10, 1923 by certain Jain and Khilafat volunteers who appeared before it with a national flag and hammer.<sup>32</sup> They were promptly arrested. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who had hitherto given leadership to the Satyagraha movement at Nagpur was arrested on June 17, 1923. He was sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment, besides payment of a fine. His motor car was attached for realising the fine of Rs. 3,000 imposed upon him, but it would not sell in Nagpur; so, the same was taken to Kathiawar for sale.<sup>33</sup> Congress volunteers from different parts of the country were pouring in to Nagpur to strengthen the Satyagraha. The Congress President had appealed to all Provincial Committees to observe 18th June as All India Flag Day and the procession on that day was witnessed, among others, by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Purushottam Das Tandon, and Makhanlal Chaturvedi who had reached Nagpur to assess the situation. On that day were arrested Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Dr. Hardikar. Kasturba Gandhi herself came down to Nagpur to witness the Satyagraha.

No less than 240 volunteers were arrested on June 18, 1923 and the total number of arrests till June 3 stood above 1,000. On July 22, 1923 Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel arrived at Nagpur to lead the flag Satyagraha. He brought the Satyagraha movement to an honourable settlement. On August 17, 1923 the prohibitory order was withdrawn and a 100 Congress volunteers were allowed to march in procession through the banned

area without interruption. Amongst those who accompanied the procession were Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Shankarlal Parekh, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan and her husband Thakur Lakshman Singh, Vasudeo Raoji, Subedar Seth Punamchandji, Thakur Indra Singh and others. The Satyagraha ended with the cries of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai", and "Rashtriya Zanda ki Jai".<sup>34</sup>

#### IV. FLAG-HOISTING AT CONGRESS

The hoisting of the Swaraj Flag, as the national flag was called from 1921 to 1931, became ceremonious from the 38th session of the Congress held at Cocanada (Andhra Pradesh—December 28, 1923—Jan. 1, 1924). Maulana Mohammed Ali, the Congress President unfurled the national flag at Gandhinagar, Cocanada at 3 p.m. on December 28, 1923. The flag was hoisted atop a 100-ft. flag staff. Addressing the 30,000 strong audience, Maulana Mohammed Ali said: "As commanded by you I am here to unfurl the Flag of the Nation. This Flag is nothing if it is not the Flag of Freedom. But it cannot be Flag of our Freedom unless it is also the Flag of our national unity".<sup>35</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi presided over the 39th session of the Indian National Congress held at Belgaum on December 26-27, 1924. The national flag of pure *Khaddar* with *Charkha* was daily hoisted on a staff of majestic height and lowered at the conclusion of the session. The volunteers in their *Khaki* and white uniforms and the *sahayikas* (lady volunteers) in their black tri-colour bordered and edged saris saluted the flag at the hoisting and lowering times every day in the horse-shoe formation.<sup>36</sup>

The national flag was unfurled at the 42nd session of the Indian National Congress held at Madras (December 26-28, 1927) by Deshapriya Jatindra Mohan Sengupta in the morning of the 25th in a grand and ostentatious ceremony, characteristic of Hindu festivals. The Congress Session was presided over by Dr. M. A. Ansari.<sup>37</sup>

A mechanical device was used to hoist the national flag at the 44th session of the Indian National Congress held at Lahore, presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. While unfurling the national flag on 29th December, 1929, Pandit Nehru made

it clear that "the flag under which you stand today and which you have just now saluted does not belong to any community. It is the flag of the country. If you have so far worked for any particular community to the detriment of the nation you have proved false. All those who stand today under this flag are Indians, not Hindus, not Muslims, but Indians".<sup>38</sup>

The official report of the Lahore Congress session says: "The National Flag under which the declaration of Independence was made was a structure deserving special mention. The flag was perched 115 ft. high from the ground. The flag post consisted of pipes with 6 ft. diameter at ground level gradually tapering to 4 ft. at the upper end. By a mechanical device a man could reach the pinnacle in one minute and come down again. On the top the flag was fitted with tri-colour electric lights 15 in number, each of 200 candle power besides one lamp of each colour of 2,000 candle power. The post was also of the tri-colour scheme. It was a glorious sight at night".<sup>39</sup>

The National Flag Day came to be observed from 1929 onwards under the auspices of the Hindustani Seva Dal, the main volunteer organisation of the Congress. The national flag was hoisted all over the country at 8 a.m. on the last Sunday of every month. This monthly flag hoisting became very popular. Buildings and many municipalities had the national flag unfurled with solemn ceremony. The Seva Dal fixed April 26th as a special day in honour of the flag in 1931.<sup>40</sup> The Gandhi Day was observed as the Flag Day since 1923.

The Working Committee<sup>41</sup> fixed Sunday, January 26th for countrywide celebration of the adoption of complete independence or Purna Swaraj as the immediate objective of the Congress. The national flag was hoisted at 8 in the morning (January 26) all over India in 1930.

**PURNA SWARAJ FLAG :** Objections were raised from time to time to the Swaraj Flag and the Indian National Congress was seized with the problem. Adoption of a new flag by a formal resolution was, therefore, imperative. The inclusion of saffron was advocated by Sanskrit scholars in 1924.<sup>42</sup> Dwijendranath Tagore<sup>43</sup> and others from Santiniketan had urged Gandhiji to include the *gairika* (*geru* or red ochre colour—saffron) on the national flag on the eve of the Belgaum session of the Congress held in 1924. They pointed out that saffron or red

ochre colour symbolised the spirit of renunciation.\* The Sikhs also wanted the saffron to be included on the national flag.

The Swaraj Flag was assailed on different grounds. The colours—red, white, and green—were already on the flags of Persia, Italy, Bulgaria and Mexico, though their dispositions were different. Bulgaria's colour scheme of their flag was identical with that of the Swaraj Flag. The communal significance ascribed to the colours of the Swaraj Flag was militating the minds of the people. There was consensus of opinion that India should have a distinctive flag. At the same time a violent departure from the existing flag was not desirable.

The Congress Working Committee which met at Karachi<sup>44</sup> on April 1-2, 1931 appointed a committee consisting of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya (Convenor), Shri D. B. Kalilkar, Dr. N. S. Hardikar, Master Tara Singh, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to recommend a flag for acceptance of the Congress after examining objections and taking evidence. A questionnaire<sup>45</sup> was sent to the Provincial Congress committees and to the press. Pandit Nehru,<sup>46</sup> in his letter to Dr. Sitaramayya, dated April 12, 1931, wrote: "The final design chosen should be that which satisfies the aesthetic sense and should be in accordance with heraldic principles". The Flag Committee<sup>47</sup> recommended that the national flag should be of saffron colour with the *Charkha* in blue colour. But the Working Committee desired to have as little change as possible in the existing flag and decided that the flag be as before, with saffron, white and green colours horizontally arranged from top to bottom, with the *Charkha* in dark blue in the centre of the white stripe.<sup>48</sup>

The All India Congress Committee which met at Bombay on August 6-8, 1931 under the presidency of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel adopted the following resolution on the National Flag:

"The National Flag shall be three coloured, horizontally arranged, as before, but the colours shall be saffron, white and green in the order stated here from top to bottom, with the spinning wheel in dark blue in the centre of the white stripe; it being understood that the colours have no communal significance, but that saffron shall represent courage and sacrifice, white, peace and truth, and

green shall represent faith and chivalry, and the spinning wheel the hope of the masses. The proportions of the flag should fly to hoist as three to two".<sup>49</sup>

The All India Congress Committee, at the same time, called upon all Congress organisations to celebrate August 30, the last Sunday of the month, as Flag Day and to hoist the new national flag. The newly-designed flag was hoisted, for the first time, on the Congress House, Bombay, by Vallabhbhai Patel, on August 8, 1931, in the presence of a large gathering who braved torrential rains to witness the ceremony.<sup>50</sup>

In short, the Purna Swaraj Flag differed from the Swaraj Flag only in changing the red colour into saffron and placing the white in the middle. This tri-colour was used as our national flag till Independence. The Purna Swaraj Flag had no stormy career as the former Swaraj Flag. The new flag used to be hoisted at the Congress sessions on the opening day. The tri-colour flag was seen from a distance fluttering in the sky day and night at the Lucknow (49th) Session of the Congress (President: Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru—April 12-14, 1936), from a 100-ft. high flag staff. The flag was illumined at night with coloured bulbs along the rope wires that held it.<sup>51</sup>

The tri-colour was removed from a Congress procession in Delhi in April 1938. Next day each member of the Congress Party wore a little National Flag on his head-dress to demonstrate the esteem in which it was held by the people of India.<sup>52</sup>

NATIONAL FLAG: A National Flag for India became necessary with the advent of Freedom. The tri-colour flag in vogue from 1931 to 1947 was so familiar that a violent departure from it was, at the same time, considered inadvisable.

The *ad hoc* Committee appointed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, took into consideration the popular feelings before finalising the design of the National Flag. Veer Savarkar urged Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Sardar Patel and Dr. N. B. Khare to include saffron on the flag and replace the *Charkha* with its symbol, *Chakra*. He sent the following telegram on 7-7-1947: "The Standard of Hindusthan must be Bhagwa—ochre-coloured... The *Charkha* must too be replaced by a *Chakra*—wheel—or any other symbol signifying progress and strength". Press reports of those days are interesting and here is one:



"New Delhi, July 10, 1947. Discussion among the members of the *ad hoc* Committee appointed by the President of the Constituent Assembly to discuss and make recommendations on the question of a National Flag for India reached a large measure of agreement, it is learnt, on adopting the Congress tri-colour as the National Flag of India with some modifications. The *ad hoc* Committee which met today is understood to have considered a number of suggestions from various quarters in this regard. Some members expressed themselves in favour of giving up the orange in the tri-colour in favour of red. It was pointed out that originally, when the Congress adopted the tri-colour, it consisted of red, green and white colours, symbolising Indian unity—red for the Hindus, green for Muslims and white for the rest. The *Charkha* superimposed on most of the Congress flags is also likely to give place to a symbol more agreeable to Indian traditions and aspirations; and a *Chakra* (wheel) is stated to have been agreed upon. The Committee is meeting again on Saturday when the final design is likely to be approved". The Constituent Assembly, after mature consideration, passed the following resolution on Tuesday, July 22, 1947 :

"Resolved that the National Flag of India shall be a horizontal tri-colour of deep saffron (Kesari), white and dark green in equal proportion. In the centre of the white band, there shall be a Wheel in navy blue to present the *Charkha*. The design of the Wheel shall be that of the Wheel (*Chakra*) which appears on the abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Asoka.

"The diameter of the Wheel shall approximate to the width of the white band.

"The ratio of the width to the length of the Flag shall ordinarily be 2: 3".<sup>53</sup>

The National Flag of India has a *Chakra* instead of the old *Charkha*. But for this minor change, the flag is the same as the old Purna Swaraj Flag. As the National Flag is not a mere political symbol to us, the Constituent Assembly, in its collective wisdom, did not make any violent change in the new flag. Thus, the traditions that have grown around it are kept alive and at the same time our forward outlook is indicated by the new Wheel. The Wheel in the flag also indicates our new status in the comity of Nations. The Wheel is the sacred symbol of our

faith in methods of peace by which the world must be ruled in times to come. Thus, the old flag has been given a new lease of life.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF COLOURS

The colours of the National Flag of India have no communal significance. This has been explained by Pandit Nehru in the Constituent Assembly. He said: "Some people, having misunderstood its significance, have thought of it in communal terms and believe that some part of it represents this community or that. But I may say that when this Flag was devised there was no communal significance attached to it".<sup>54</sup>

1. *Saffron*: Dr. S. Radhakrishnan explained the philosophy behind the saffron in the flag in the Constituent Assembly in this way: "The red, the orange, the *Bhagwa* colour represents the spirit of renunciation. It is said: *Sarve tyage rajadharmaesu drishta* (All forms of renunciation are to be embodied in *Raja dharma*). Philosophers must be kings. Our leaders must be disinterested. They must be dedicated spirits. They must be people who are imbued with the spirit of renunciation which that saffron colour has transmitted to us from the beginning of our history. That stands for the fact that the world belongs not to the wealthy, not to the prosperous but to the meek and the humble, the dedicated and the detached. That spirit of detachment, that spirit of renunciation is represented by the orange or the saffron colour and Mahatma Gandhi has embodied it for us in his life and the Congress has worked under his guidance and with his message. If we are not imbued with that spirit of renunciation in these difficult days, we will again go under".<sup>55</sup>

Seth Govind Das said: "I want to tell those who say that the saffron colour represents Hindus, that it is wrong to say so. No doubt at one time it was the colour of the Hindus. During the regime of the Peshwas it was the colour of the Hindus. In their fights for freedom, Rajputs used saffron dress and saffron ensign. But if we go more remote into the past, we will have to accept that saffron was not the colour of these times. You may be knowing that in the times of Mahabharata there was no question of colour... Therefore to describe any colour as the

ancient colour of the Hindus is historically wrong. I say that it is natural that the flag under which we fought the battle of freedom during the last 27 years and have now achieved independence, should be our national flag".<sup>56</sup>

Saiyid Mohammed Saadulla drew an analogy from Nature and said: "The saffron represents the condition of the earth, the scorched condition caused by the torrid heat of the Indian Sun . . . The saffron, as is well known, is the colour of all those people who live the spiritual life not only among Hindus but also among Muslims. Therefore the saffron colour should remind us that we should keep ourselves on that high plane of renunciation which has been the realm of our *Sadhus* and saints, *Pirs* and *Pandits*".<sup>57</sup>

To H. J. Khandekar saffron signified the depressed classes of India. "When Shivaji was in power and when a chance of freeing this country and establishing a Hindu Raj arose our community sacrificed lacs of persons under this saffron banner. For example, the Iron pillar of Siddhanath Mahar in Koragaon reminds us of that age and even today".<sup>58</sup>

Pandit Govind Malaviya quoted the Atharva Veda in the Constituent Assembly which stipulated that "Arunah santu keta-wah", i.e., the flags should be red and said: "The red colour at the top represents fire and Sun . . . Now, according to the Hindu mythology, the first thing that the Creator (Brahma) did was to create the Sun and the Moon. The Hindus—the Aryans—have since their very beginning been worshipping the Sun, Fire and the Moon. The Sun and the Moon are worshipful deities. This flag represents these very gods—the Fire, the Sun, and the Moon".<sup>59</sup>

There is general agreement among scholars that saffron stands for courage and sacrifice. The red (saffron), according to some, represents the *Tamas guna* of ancient Hindus. Orange (saffron) represents the uniform of Indian asceticism through ages.

While urging the inclusion of saffron in our tri-colour flag in 1931, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the late National Professor in Humanities in India, wrote: "It seems that the ideas of renunciation and harmlessness—of *Vairagya* and *Ahimsa*—form the keynote of Indian life, whether Hindu or Muhammedan or Christian. This is the ideal which would send the king in



Congress Flag, 1930

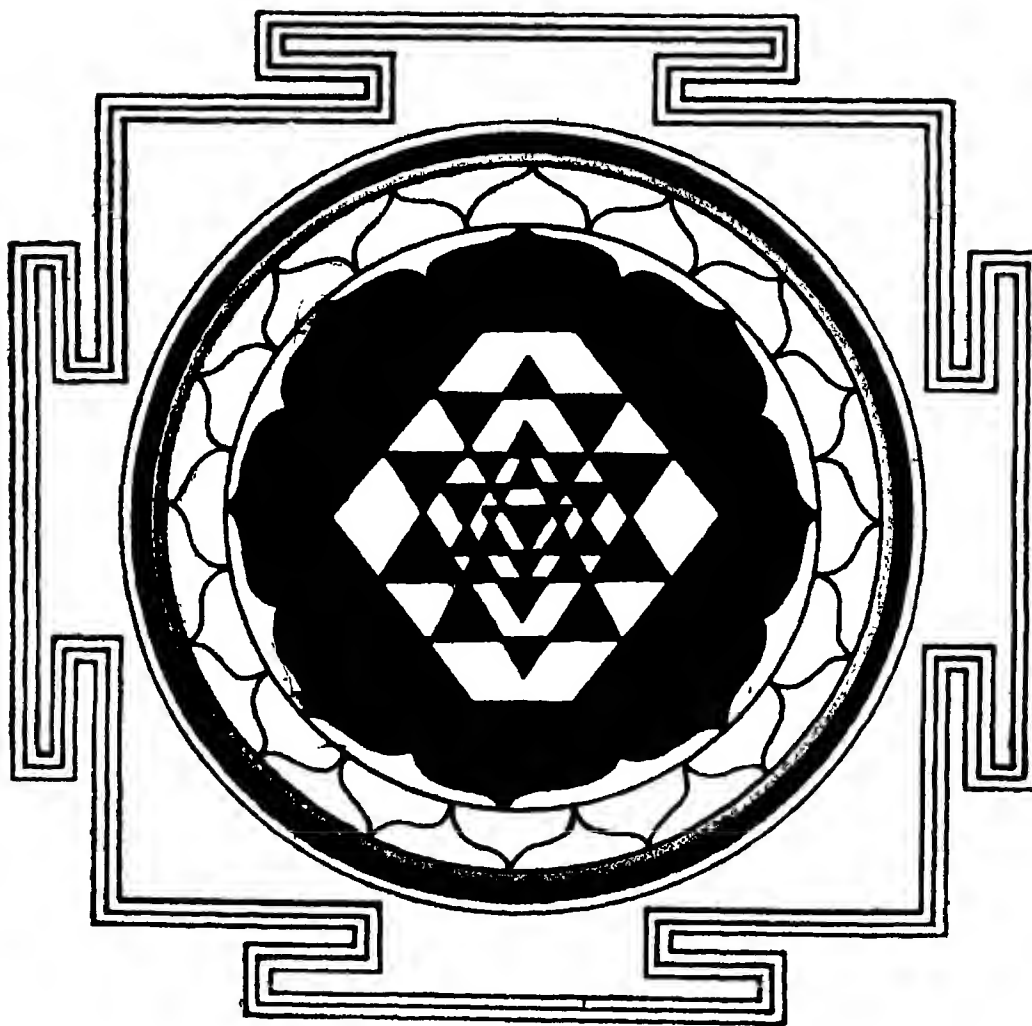


Diagram of the Sri Chakra

his old age to the forest hermitage in Hindu India; the same ideal of renunciation made Prince Siddhartha, the Buddha that was to be, don the saffron garb of the ascetic; and behind the magnificence of the Mogul Court it was this idea, again which dominated the eclectic Akbar... An Indian is never in so great love with life and its possessions as to think highly of a 'death in harness' in his old age: life has far deeper and more mysterious meaning for him than piling up the goods of the world, or going on building something and yet starving his soul. He would rather be a mendicant in the shrine of his own faith and pious contemplation, guiding and helping his followers and yet feeling detached from them. That is why the faith in the unseen world and preparation for it which Islam teaches with such insistence found a genial soil in India, more than perhaps in any other land where Islam penetrated... The *geru* or *gairika*, the red ochre or saffron colour worn by the Indian Sanyasi brings to our mind most forcibly the picture of this great ideal of Detachment and Harmlessness. This saffron colour is also the colour of discipline in life, physically or morally and spiritually, for it is the colour enjoined upon the Brahmacharin. A modification of this saffron colour is the yellowish brown—the *Kasaya* or *Kashaya*—of Buddhism, where it is the great symbol of Buddhist brotherhood with its insistence of Ahimsa. This colour is of the Earth—it is a kind of *khaki*, for the red ochre is a pigment which is a gift of Mother Earth. This red-brown tint of the white has also been accepted by Islam in India, for Muhammedan Faqirs with robes dyed in *geru* are as much the wanderers over the highways of India as are their brothers in the quest, the Hindu Sadhus. It does not require much imagination or sense of the fitness of things to feel that in India's National Flag her great message of *Brahmacharya*, *Ahimsa*, and *Vairagya* should be symbolised by a colour which has been associated by her people with these ideals from time immemorial".<sup>60</sup>

2. *White* : The white colour in the very centre of our National Flag, according to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, represents the "white of the Sun's rays. The white means the path of light. There is darkness even at noon as some people have urged, but it is necessary for us to dissipate these clouds of darkness and control our conduct by the ideal light, the light of truth, of transparent simplicity which is illustrated by the colour of white.

“We cannot attain purity, we cannot gain our goal of truth, unless we walk in the path of virtue”.<sup>61</sup>

Saiyid Mohammed Saadulla explained that white, both among Hindus and Muslims, is the emblem of purity. “The presence of the white portion in this Flag should remind every one who takes it up that we must be pure not only in word but also in deed. Purity should be the motto of our life—individually as well as in connection with the State”.<sup>62</sup>

The white, according to H. J. Khandekar, denoted “peace and tranquillity” and indicated “unity amongst all the communities in this country”. For this reason “this Flag represents every religion and every language in the country”.<sup>63</sup>

White is the universal symbol of purity, chastity, temperance, and virginity. It denotes holiness, spirituality, and perfection. Being the fullness of all colours, white signify the perfection of God. White is the symbol of majesty, nobility, awe, glorification, joy, spiritual ecstasy and energy. Peace, truce, redemption, mercy, revolution without bloodshed and regulation are also symbolised by white.<sup>64</sup> “The white colour is symbolical of Purity and Truth, the traditional colour in which Sarasvati is represented as the goddess of learning or Truth”,<sup>65</sup> explains Prof. Radhakumud Mookerji.

3. *Green*: Dr. S. Radhakrishnan explained the significance of green on our National Flag in the Constituent Assembly in this way: “The green is there—our relation to the soil, our relation to the plant life here on which all other life depends. We must build our Paradise here on this green earth. If we are to succeed in this enterprise, we must be guided by truth (white), practise virtue (wheel), adopt the methods of self-control and renunciation (saffron)”.<sup>66</sup>

The green on our National Flag reminded Seth Govind Das of the War of Independence in 1857. “At that time, the colour of our flag was green and under it we fought the battle. It was at that time not the colour of Muslims alone or of Hindus but of all those who fought the War of Independence”.<sup>67</sup>

Muslims attach great significance to the green colour, because it is the colour of the Flag of Muslims from the time of the great Prophet of Arabia. The green colour represents the Budha. “This very Budha according to Hindu mythology, is the God

of Wealth. The green colour of the Budha is the emblem of prosperity and happiness of society".<sup>68</sup>

Green, the colour of vegetation, is the colour of life and growth, and this symbolism, according to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, is current among all the nations of the earth. "As a people, above all, we want to live, and we can very well have the symbol of Life in our national emblem. Green is also the colour of Hope, and we live largely in hope. As we want to live we want to strive—we want to fulfill a purpose in our existence. Life for us should be something more than mere existence. It is a quest—it is a kind of ardour which would rise superior to all oppositions, material, moral, and spiritual, in our realisation of the Ideal".<sup>69</sup>

The green is symbolical of agriculture on which depends the vast majority of the Indian people. It points to the fundamental fact that India through the ages has been built up as a rural and not as an urban civilisation, of which the roots were grown in the *Asramas* and hermitages of the forests in which India thought out her highest, the abode of Seers or Rishis as examples of Plain Living and High Thinking. As the poet Tagore says: "A most wonderful thing we notice in India is that here the forest, not the town, is the fountain-head of all its civilisation. The current of civilisation that flowed from its forests inundated the whole of India".<sup>70</sup>

The green symbolises (1) earthly, tangibly growing things, vegetation; (2) fertility (of Mother Earth), nature; (3) resurrection, permanence, immortality; (4) love; (5) neutrality, passivity, indecision; (6) freshness, youth, innocence, virtue; (6) liberty, peace; (8) joy, hospitality, and (9) meditation, knowledge, wisdom, insight; a mind transcending the world. The green colour is symbolic of fertility and health-rites all over the world.<sup>71</sup>

## CHAKRA

The National Flag of India has a wheel in the centre of its white band in navy blue to represent the *Charkha*. The design of the wheel is that of the Asoka *Chakra*. The *Charkha* (spinning wheel) has been substituted with the Asoka *Chakra* as it is the symbol not only of *Charkha*, but also much more than



that. "If the flag were to symbolise the Nation's soul and its *Sadhana*, both *bhakti* and *mukti* must be indicated," and with plenty of graceful and incessant movement. A flag must have an abiding value and its design must be a work of art. It must at least have some meaning. A simple 'Charkha' may exhibit the sorrow of the stomach merely. It is puerile to think that it suffices to indicate the Nation's condition and concern. If Mahatma Gandhi also thinks so... well, I shut up", wrote Andhra Ratna D. Gopalakrishnayya to G. V. Subba Rao on 26.5.1925. He suggested the replacement of *Charkha* with *Chakra*. Thus, the suggestion to substitute *Charkha* with *Chakra* was voiced even in 1925.

Dr. S. K. Chatterji advocated the substitution of the *Charkha* with a *Chakra* in 1931. *Charkha*, according to him on our National Flag represented our desire for the simple life and our will to combat poverty with the wholesome remedy of our cottage industries. But the *Khaddar* cloth, of which the National Flag is made, is itself the product of the *Charkha*; and thus amply represented this ideal. *Charkha* was cumbersome on our national flag and its variation by a wheel was advocated by Dr. Chatterji to represent the Eternity, Time and Progress. "We can put any great idea or meaning to it, and it will not be vulgar. In Persian, the word for wheel, *charkh*, signifies also the celestial globe, the sphere of the heavens, as well as a circular motion and fortune. The ancient Indian use of this symbol is as varied as it is profound. We can have symbol of Eternity as something mystic behind existence as an embellishment of our flag". He added that "this symbol can further be employed in a most appropriate manner to indicate one great fact in our national life in a United States of India—our federalism which in principle has been accepted for the constitution of our country. The wheel can be made to represent our India as a Federal Union: and we can then take the spokes to stand for the constituent members of the Federation—the various Provinces and States... The ideal of the individual spokes forming the wheel should be enough, and we can have a wheel of the minimum number of spokes—three, or better four—for the flag".<sup>72</sup>

The significance of the *Chakra* in our National Flag was explained by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 22nd July 1947 while moving the Resolution on the subject. He said: "In the white

previously there was the *Charkha* which symbolised the common man in India, which symbolised the masses of the people, which symbolised their industry and which came to us from the message which Mahatma Gandhi delivered. Now, this particular *Charkha* symbol has been slightly varied in this Flag, not taken away at all. Why then has this been varied? Normally speaking the symbol on one side of the Flag should be exactly the same as on the other side. Otherwise, there is a difficulty which goes against the rules. Now, the *Charkha*, as it appeared previously on this Flag, had the wheel on one side and the spindle on the other. If you see the other side of the Flag, the spindle comes the other way and the wheel comes this way; if it does not do so, it is not proportionate, because the wheel must be towards the pole, not towards the end of the flag. There was this practical difficulty. Therefore, after considerable thought, we were of course convinced that this great symbol which had enthused people should continue but that it should continue in a slightly different form, that the wheel should be there, not the rest of the *Charkha*, that is the spindle and the string which created this confusion, that the essential part of the *Charkha* should be there, that is the wheel. So, the old tradition continue in regard to the *Charkha* and the wheel. But what type of wheel should we have? Our minds went back to many wheels but notably one famous wheel, which had appeared in many places and which all of us have seen, the one at the top of the capital of the Asoka column and in many other places. That Wheel is a symbol of India's ancient culture, it is a symbol of the many things that India had stood for through the ages. So we thought that this *Chakra* emblem should be there and that wheel appears".<sup>73</sup>

Asoka's wheel, *Dharma-chakra*, symbolised the Wheel of Law. Dr. Radhakrishnan explained the philosophy behind Asoka's wheel in his own characteristic way: "Asoka's wheel represents to us the Wheel of the Law, the Wheel of the *Dharma*, by the practice of Virtue, Truth,—*Satya*, *Dharma*—Virtue, these ought to be the controlling principles of all those who work under this Flag. It also tells us that the *Dharma* is something which is perpetually moving. If this country has suffered in the recent past, it is due to our resistance to change. There are ever so many challenges hurled at us and if we have not got the

courage and the strength to move along with the times, we will be left behind. There are ever so many institutions which are worked into our social fabric like caste and untouchability. Unless these things are scrapped, we cannot say that we either seek truth or practice virtue. This wheel, which is a rotating thing, which is a perpetually revolving thing, indicates to us that there is death in stagnation. There is life in movement. Our *Dharma* is *Sanatana*, eternal, not in the sense that it is a fixed deposit but in the sense that it is perpetually changing. Its uninterrupted continuity is its *Sanatana* character. So even with regard to our social conditions it is essential for us to move forward".<sup>74</sup>

To Saiyid Mohammed Saadulla the decision to replace *Charkha* with the Asoka *Chakra* was "really a heavenly-born inspiration". He said: "The *Dharma-chakra* of Asoka reminds us of the condition of the people at the time of that great Buddhist Emperor of India. He ruled not for his personal aggrandisement but for the contentment, peace and prosperity of the people under his charge. This emblem now embodied in our National Flag ought to remind every administrator and every citizen of the federation of India that we should forget the past and look to the future and try to carry on the tradition of that great Buddhist Emperor Asoka, and we should be reminded at all times that we are here not only for our material prosperity but also for our spiritual advancement".<sup>75</sup>

Asoka's wheel is not his own creation. It is an old Indian symbol standing for the Sun. According to the Satapatha Brahmana, a gold disc was used as a Sun symbol. It is the wheel of *Samsara* which revolves on these eternal virtues of *Satyam*, *Sivam*, *Sundaram*. The wheel is described as *bhagavato dhama chakam* in Buddhism and represents *dharma* in the combination of symbols known as *Tri-ratna*. A wheel-shaped cake was used as a Sun symbol in the Vedic Maharatra festival. It is the *Sudarshana Chakra* (= the beautiful to look at discus) of Lord Vishnu. The *Sudarshana Chakra* is the cosmic circle within which is comprehended all that is animate and inanimate (*akhanda mandalakaram vyaptam yena chara acharam*). The wheel or discus of Vishnu is held to prove the solar affinity of the god.

The wheel and its variant the disc appear on early Indian coins. They are regarded as solar symbols. The Sun represented as a rayed disc appears on the devices of the coins of Suryamitra and Bhanumitra, dated the 2nd century B.C. The wheel and its numerous variants appear on the early punch-marked coins of India. On some cast copper coins of the 3rd century B.C. the symbol is a large rayed disc. The disc with other symbols appear on numerous series of early coins from 200 B.C. to 7th century A.C., including Gupta coins of Kanauj, Magadha, Malwa and Saurashtra.

The wheel appears in a pictographic legend on a paste stamp seal found at Mohenjo-Daro. The wheel is represented on the Harappan pottery. Thus, the wheel as a solar symbol, is pretty old in India.<sup>76</sup>

The *Chakra*, the old symbol of India, was adopted by the Buddha to launch his new Faith. Though the traditions of the wheel go back to hoary antiquity, credit goes to Asoka for translating its symbolism into stone. As the *Dharma-chakra*, the Wheel, is truly the contribution of Buddhism to Indian culture, as explained in the preceding Chapter.

Gandhiji himself had favoured the substitution of the *Charkha* with a *Chakra* as the design of the spinning wheel was not very easy to draw on the flag. The flag was not symmetrical if the *Charkha* was included. Ridiculous figures of *Charkha* were seen when the flag was flying. In fact, Gandhiji published a 'Thoughtful Suggestion' from S. D. Kalelkar in the *Harijan* of July 6, 1947, paving the way for the Constituent Assembly to adopt the simple wheel, as symbolic of the *Charkha*, making it easier to draw, symmetrical in design, and without creating confusion with the obverse and reverse sides of the flag. Kalelkar visualised in the wheel the *Kisan* movement, *Kranti* (revolution) and the Buddhist *Dharma-chakra*. "The spiritual basis of our Indian civilisation might thus be made pronounced in our national symbol which will carry the message of peace and non-violence to the whole world", Kalelkar wrote: Thus, the substitution of the *Charkha* with the *Chakra* had the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi, who was the Father of the National Flag as well.

Some people, however, tried to create an impression that Gandhiji was peeved at the disappearance of the *Charkha* from

our National Flag and quoted him out of context to prove their view-point.<sup>77</sup> What Gandhiji wrote was this: "To liken it (spinning wheel) to and to derive it from the Ashoka disc is to recognize in the insignificant looking *Charkha* the necessity of obeying the ever-moving Wheel of the Divine Law of Love".<sup>78</sup> Speaking of the National Flag at his post-prayer meeting in New Delhi on 24-7-1947, Gandhiji said: "The New National Flag was in implication the same as the existing tri-colour flag with the *Charkha*. So far as he knew, for the sake of the exigencies of design, the wheel was kept without the *mal* and the spindle".<sup>79</sup> Gandhiji had made it clear on July 22, 1947 at a prayer meeting in New Delhi: "What I do know is that even if the *Charkha* was shown in the flag but was not in the people's hearts, both the flag and the *Charkha* would be fit only to be burnt. But if the *Charkha* had a place in the hearts of the people, then it would not matter whether it was placed on the flag or not. I only want that the country should have only one flag and every one should salute it".<sup>80</sup>

Pandit Nehru countered all criticism on this point in his press statement dated August 31, 1947: "The *Charkha* added a certain beauty of conception to the Flag. Because the full *Charkha* is not there now, it must not be imagined that we have given up the *Charkha* or what it meant. In the Resolution of the Constituent Assembly it was stated clearly that the wheel in the centre represented the *Charkha*. This symbolic representation retains in its entirety the conception behind the *Charkha* and is, in fact, a continuation of that idea in a somewhat more feasible and artistic form more suited to the Flag".<sup>81</sup>

**Conclusion:** India's National Flag is very beautiful to look at purely from the point of artistry, and every part of it symbolises the culture of India and her national aspiration. Pandit Nehru has put it beautifully thus: "It is beautiful and artistic, it is essentially the Flag of our struggle for freedom and our triumph, it is the Flag representing the common man and the masses of India, and at the same time, modern as it is, it takes us back to the great cultural traditions of ancient India which have continued in some measure throughout the ages".<sup>82</sup> It is a Flag thus both of the permanence of Indian culture and the dynamic quality of India. Our flag is not the "Flag of an Empire, a Flag of Imperialism, a Flag of domination over anybody,

but a Flag of freedom not only for ourselves, but a symbol of freedom to all people who may see it". It is not the Flag of the rich or the wealthy, but the Flag of the depressed, oppressed and submerged classes all over our country.

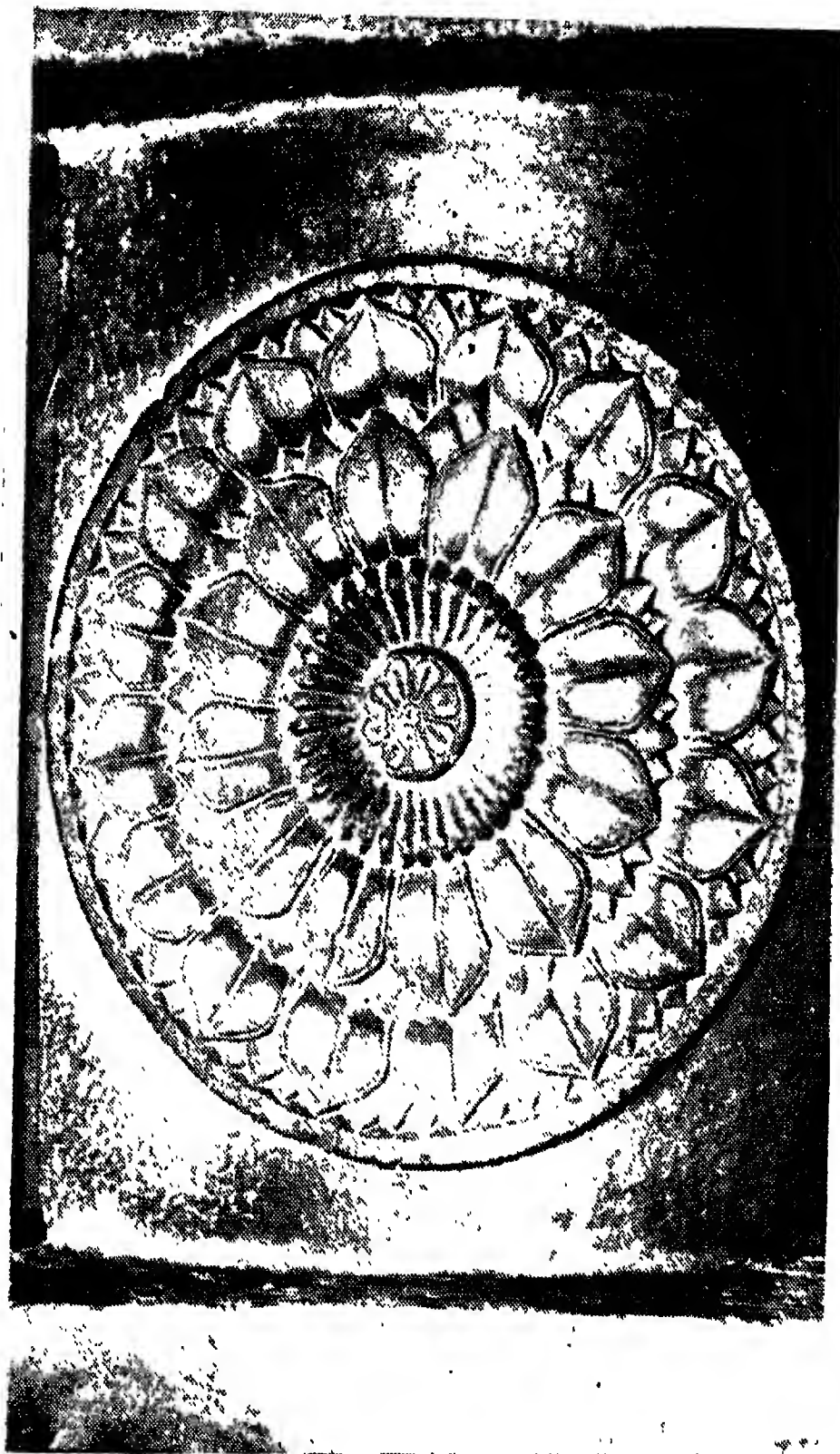
The National Flag is the creation of the genius of the people of India. It is the legacy bequeathed to us by the architects of liberty. It links up the past with the present. The *Dharma-chakra* of Asoka is its most distinguishing feature. That is why we have called it *Chakra-dhvaja* and titled this Chapter as such.

"For my part", Pandit Nehru said in the Constituent Assembly, "I am exceedingly happy that in this sense indirectly we have associated with this Flag of ours not only the emblem but in a sense the name of Asoka, one of the most magnificent names not only in India's history but in world history. It is well that at this moment of strife, conflict and intolerance, our minds should go back towards what India stood for in the ancient days and what it has stood for, I hope and believe, essentially throughout the ages in spite of mistakes and errors and degradations from time to time... Now because I have mentioned the name of Asoka I should like you to think that the Asokan period in Indian history was essentially an international period of Indian history. It was not a narrowly national period. It was a period when India's ambassadors went abroad to far countries and went abroad not in the way of Empire and imperialism, but as ambassadors of peace and culture and goodwill".<sup>83</sup> Thus, the Indian National Flag, embodies the message of freedom and comradeship to the world at large.



5.

**PURNA-GHATA (Lotus Vase)**  
circa, 2nd Century A. D., Amaravati  
(Indian Museum, Photo : Radhakanta Paul)



A LOTUS MEDALLION FROM BHARHUT,  
circa B. C. 2nd Century  
(Indian Museum, Photo : Kadhakanta Paul)



# 6

## LOTUS—OUR NATIONAL FLOWER

The lotus (*Nelumbium speciosum*, Willd) is the most beautiful symbol India has ever presented to the world to depict her civilisation and culture from the prehistorical Harappan times to the present day. This is the only flower which has claimed an uninterrupted symbolic history with a range and subtlety of meaning comparable to life itself in ancient Indian thought for the past five thousand years and continue to exercise its charm over the modern Indian mind. Its place in the Vedic philosophy is unique and it provides the key, so to say, to unlock the gates of Indian theosophy. Gods and goddesses, high and low, in the Hindu pantheon, cherish to hold the lotus or use it as their seat. Vishnu, the second of the Hindu triad, holds sway over the rest and His symbol is the lotus (*Padma*). The lotus is an omnipresent symbol in Buddhism. Its place in Jainism is no less important. In fact the symbolism of the lotus is universal.

An ancient symbol like the lotus has behind it deep philosophical meaning. The symbolism of the lotus spread from India to Egypt via Persia and thence to the Western World. Buddhists were responsible for popularising the lotus in Tibet, China, Japan, Indonesia and Indian ocean island States. It is in the fitness of things that the lotus has been adopted as India's National Flower.

It is our intention in this Chapter to trace the symbolism of the lotus in the Vedas, Puranas and Pali canon in order to correlate its relevance to the iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains and individual worship of Brahmanic deities with the help of *Mandalas* and *Chakras*. This is necessary to understand its place in Indian culture, for icons are the best expressions of the artistic traditions of a Nation.

*Amarakosa* or *Namalinganusasana* of Amara Sinha, the 4th-century A.D. Sanskrit lexicon, has given the following words for the lotus.





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*Kumudityam Nalinyam tu bisini Padminimukha/  
 Va pumsi Padmam nalinam aravindam mahotpalam//  
 Sahasrapatram kamalam satapatram kusesayam/  
 Pankeruham tamarasam sarasam sarasiruham//  
 Bisa prasunarajjiva pushkara ambhoruhani cha/  
 Pundarikam sitambhojam atha rakta saroruhe//*

*Abja*, *ambhojam*, *Ambhujam*, *ambhoruham*, *aravindam*, *jalejatam*, *Kuhlara*, *kamalam*, *kokanadam*, *kumudam*, *kuvalayam*, *kusesayam*, *mahapundarika*, *mahotpalam*, *mrinala*, *padmam*, *pankajam*, *pankeruham*, *pundarikam*, *pushkara*, *sahasrapatra*, *sarasam*, *sarasijam*, *sarasiruham*, *sarojam*, *saroruham*, *satapatram*, *subhagasronika*, *tamarasam*, and *utpala* are some of the words used in Sanskrit to designate the lotus.<sup>2</sup> These words are either the species of the plant or its flower, which botanists call *Nelumbium speciosum*. *Padma*<sup>3</sup> is India's National Flower which in Botany is the *Nelumbium speciosum*, Willd. This flower opens in the morning and closes in the evening. *Abja*<sup>4</sup> is the earliest name by which the lotus plant was called by the Vedas.

## I. LOTUS IN THE VEDAS

The Vedic Aryans had an infatuation with *Pushkara*, the sacred lotus, for there are several references to this flower in the Rig Veda.<sup>5</sup> The Atharva Veda contains at least four references to *Pushkara* and its ponds (*Pushkarini*).<sup>6</sup> *Pundarika* is another variety of this flower mentioned in the Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda.<sup>7</sup> *Kumuda* and *Kamala* varieties of this flower are also referred to in the Atharva Veda.<sup>8</sup>

The *Pushkara* also finds mention in the Taittiriya Samhita,<sup>9</sup> Vajasaneyi Samhita,<sup>10</sup> Maitrayani Samhita, Taittiriya Brahmana<sup>11</sup> and Satapatha Brahmana.<sup>12</sup> *Pundarika* is also mentioned in the Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads.

According to the cosmogony of the Vedas, "All this was water", before the creation of the Universe.<sup>13</sup> The Vedic poet states clearly that "O Agni, in the beginning Atharvan (i.e., *prana*) churned thee out of the lotus (i.e., from the cosmic waters), the bearer of all".<sup>14</sup> The birth-place of Agni is the lotus. The meaning of this Vedic conception<sup>15</sup> is explained in the Satapatha Brahmana as thus: "O Agni, Atharvan rubbed thee out of the lotus flower. Lotus flower is indeed water.

Breath of life is Atharvan. Indeed the breath of life rubbed it out of the water in the beginning".<sup>16</sup> Further explanation is given in the same Brahmana<sup>17</sup> when it states: "Thou art the water's back...and the womb of Agni;—'around the swelling sea',—for the sea indeed swells around it;—'thou, growing mighty upon the lotus',—that is 'growing, prosper thou on the lotus'..." The idea is developed further in the Satapatha Brahmana when it is said: "...the lotus means the waters and this earth is a leaf thereof:...Now this same earth is Agni's womb, for Agni (the fire-altar) is this earth..."<sup>18</sup> Or in the more picturesque language of the same scripture: "Agni went away from the gods; he entered the water. The gods said to Prajapati, 'Go thou in search of him: to thee, his own father, he will reveal himself'. He became a white horse, and went in search of him. He found him on a lotus leaf, having crept forth from the waters".<sup>19</sup>

The Satapatha Brahmana contains yet another romantic story about the origin of the lotus. "When Indra had smitten Vritra, he thinking that he had not laid him low, entered the waters. He said to them, 'I am afraid: make ye a stronghold for me!' Now what essence of the waters there was they gathered upwards (on the surface), and made it a stronghold for him; and because they made (*kar*) a stronghold (*pul*) for him, therefore it is 'pushkara'; 'pushkara' being what is mythically called 'pushkara' (lotus-leaf) for the gods love the mystic. Now when he puts it (the gold plate) on the lotus-leaf, he then establishes him (Agni) in that essence which the waters gathered together for him (Indra), and in that stronghold which they made for him".<sup>20</sup>

The Maitrayani Samhita<sup>21</sup> and Panchavimsa Brahmana<sup>22</sup> have also narrated the story of Indra's slaying of the fierce demon Vritra and the god's taking of refuge in the lotus. But the story found in these scriptures is slightly different. "Indra slew Vritra. These two obtained his forms: She (earth, obtained) the variegated forms and he (heaven, obtained) the heavenly bodies. Through the down-shining of heavenly bodies the lotus springs up. It is the form of power".<sup>23</sup> The Taittiriya Samhita says: "Growing to might as the lotus flower, Do thou extend in width with the measure of heaven".<sup>24</sup> The Taittiriya Brahmana speaks of a garland of lotuses (*pundarika-sraja*) and gives another aetioloical myth: "Angirases, while going to the region of hea-

ven, let enter (their) consecration and heat into water. That became lotus. He who offers the lotus garland restrains consecration and heat".<sup>25</sup>

The Panchavimsa Brahmana<sup>26</sup> speaks of the lotus flower as 'born of the light of constellations'. This does not differ from the story found in the Satapatha Brahmana: "Lotuses are an appearance of heaven, an appearance of heavenly bodies".<sup>27</sup> Hence it is addressed thus: "With the measure of the sky, extend thou (Agni) in width...for that Agni is yonder Sun; and him assuredly none other than the width of the sky can contain...And the lotus leaf is the sky; for the sky is the waters, and the lotus-leaf is the waters".<sup>28</sup>

The close association of the lotus with water is figuratively spoken of in the Panchavimsa Brahmana and Maitrayani Samhita thus: "The lustre of Varuna departed as he was consecrated. It (lustre) fell into three parts. One third became Bhrigu (the seer), one third Srayantiya (*saman*), and one third entered the water...that he who puts on a lotus garland, by him that virility is obtained having reached it (virility)".<sup>29</sup> The close association of the lotus with water signified its blossoms a universal life in exuberance.<sup>30</sup>

The lotus-leaf is the immortal element from which the speech (*Vac*) is produced: hence the Vedas. That is why the Vedic fire-altar is built upon that leaf. "When he builds up the Fire-altar after laying down the lotus-leaf, it is on that immortal element that he builds for himself a body consisting of the *Rik*, the *Yajus*, and the *Saman*; and he becomes immortal".<sup>31</sup>

The entire Vedic thought about the lotus is summarised in the Maitrayana-Brahmana-Upanishad when it says: "And he who having entered the inner lotus of the heart, devours food, the same having gone to the sky as the fire of the Sun, called Time, and being invisible, devours all beings as his food.

"What is that lotus and what is it made? (the Valakhilyas ask): That lotus is the same as the ether; the four quarters, and the four intermediate points are its leaves".<sup>32</sup>

The Vedic conception about the origin of the lotus from waters (later personified as Varuna, the Lord of Waters), and the brilliance of its flower (fire, personified as Agni and later Sun) is beautifully explained in the Satapatha Brahmana: "That shining orb is the same as this gold plate (under the altar), and

that glowing light is the same as this lotus leaf (under the altar); for there are waters, and the lotus-leaf is water".<sup>33</sup> The lotus plant thus represents the cosmic waters and the earth is a lotus-leaf floating in the waters. This, perhaps, explains the following charm to ward off danger from fire, found in the Atharva Veda Samhita: "Where thou comest (O fire), and where thou goest away, the blooming durva-plant shall grow: a well-spring there shall rise up, or a lotus-laden pool".<sup>34</sup>

The Vedic philosophy behind the lotus as an exemplar of fertility must have been the source of the *Padma-kosa* (lotus-vase) motif in Indian art beginning from the days of Asoka the Great, if not earlier.<sup>35</sup> Asoka's pillars at Sarnath, Sanchi and other places have the lotus-vase as their base. This is nothing but the *Purna-Kalasa/Bhadra-Kalasa*,<sup>36</sup> the auspicious symbol of the Vedic Aryans, which has come down to us in everyday life. In popular parlance this *Kalasa* is called the *Mangala-ghata*, *Mangala-kalasa* or *Purna-kumbha/Purna-ghata*.

The Atharva Veda takes this *Purna-Kumbha* as the womb which conceals within it the mystery of the birth of all creatures.<sup>37</sup> The Yajur Veda repeats the same idea.<sup>38</sup> The lotus is said to be pregnant with the three *gunas* and that is the reason why their bunches are inserted in the *Purna-Kalasa*.<sup>39</sup> The symbolism of the *Padma-kosa* motif was well understood by the people of India for the Bhagavata Purana says the primeval lotus arose from the depths of the infinite ocean impelled by the irresistible power of energising Time.<sup>40</sup> It filled with its radiance the universal waters and it was self-born.<sup>41</sup> This *Padma-kosa* is called the *Loka-Padma* (cosmic Lotus) by the same Purana.<sup>42</sup> The Rig Vedic conception of the cosmic Lotus is thus explained by the Bhagavata Purana.

The myths about the origin of the lotus found in the Vedas lay stress upon the nature of the plant like (1) its origin from the water (personified later as Varuna), (2) the beauty of its flower (i.e., heavenly splendour—slaying of Vritra by Indra) and (3) its opening early in the morning and closing in the evening (Sun myth through Agni). These Vedic conceptions are the foundations upon which the entire symbolism of the lotus has been built up in later Indian thought.

Apart from the aetiological myths of the lotus, as outlined above, there are some scattered references to this plant in the



Vedic literature, mostly in the nature of similes. The lotus finds mention as personal adornment of the Asvins, the youthful twin gods of the morning, for they are *pushkarasraja* (having lotus garlands).<sup>43</sup> They are propitiated to stir gently the babe in its tenth month in the womb of the mother: "Like as the wind on every side ruffles a pool of lotuses, so stir in thee the babe unborn, so may the ten-month babe descend".<sup>44</sup> Lotus-ponds were considered beautiful by the Vedic bard, for the Rig Veda<sup>45</sup> says: "This house of hospitality is declared like a lotus pond, like a wonderful dwelling of gods". The Atharva Veda says that "Not in his field (is) a lotus pond, the bulb (*bisa*) of the bulb-bearing lotus is not produced (*jan*) in whose kingdom the Brahman's wife is obstructed through ignorance".<sup>46</sup> In the Yajur Veda the worshipper prays for the birth of a boy without which there can be no joy to a man in the world. The abounding joy from the birth of a boy has been made the more exuberant by the association of the lotus flower. Thus it symbolised the joyousness of human birth ("Father bestow on me a babe a boy enwreathed with lotuses, so that there may be here a man").<sup>47</sup> The comparison of the human heart with the lotus (*Pundarika*) is traceable to the Atharva Veda.<sup>48</sup>

The simile in the Bhagavad Gita is classic: "He who resigns his activities to the Universal Self (*brahman*) by foresaking attachment to them and their results, remains unstained by evil—just as the lotus leaf remains unstained by water".<sup>49</sup> Just as the leaves of the lotus, which because of their smooth oily surface, are not affected by the water in which they grow and remain, so likewise the man established in the Self; the waves of the world in which he dwells do not destroy him.

The Jaiminiya Brahmana (Purvabhaga) mentions white and blue lotuses that bloom in the river of Paradise in the *Varun-loka*.<sup>50</sup>

The lotus first appears in the Brahmanas associated with Prajapati. The Taittiriya Brahmana tells how Prajapati, desiring to evolve the universe, which in the beginning was fluid, saw a lotus-leaf (*pushkara-parna*) standing erect out of water. Thinking it must rest on something, he dived in the form of a boar, and, finding the earth below, broke off a fragment, rose with it to the surface, spread it out on the leaf. The Taittiriya Aranyaka relates that when the Universe was still fluid, Prajapati alone

was produced on a lotus-leaf.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps this gives us the clue to the birth of Brahma.

## II. LOTUS IN THE PURANAS

The birth of Brahma from Vishnu's navel, as from the universal water, is well known. The Bhagavata Purana says: "When Bhagavat (Vishnu), wrapped in meditative slumber, reclined on the ocean there sprang from his navel like from a pond a lotus which gave birth to Brahma, the creator". This is explained later in the same Purana.<sup>52</sup> "The elements being separately unable to create, deposited, when united by the action of destiny, a golden egg formed by the elements. This egg-shell lay lifeless in the waters of the ocean. The Lord (Isvara) dwelt in it for a complete (period of a) thousand years. From his navel sprang a lotus splendid as a thousand suns, the abode of all living things, where Svarat (Brahma) himself was born". That is why Vishnu has five names beginning with *Padma*: *Padmapani* (having a lotus in hand), *Padmanibhekshana*, and *Ara-vindaksha* (having lotus-like eyes), *Padmanabha* (having a lotus on his navel) and *Padmagarbha* (having a lotus-like heart). The lotus flower, represented as growing out of Vishnu's navel, the god who rests in the waters of Space on the Serpent of Infinity, is the most graphic symbol ever yet made. It is the Universe evolving from the Centrai Sun, the Point, the ever-concealed Germ, says Madame Blavatsky.<sup>53</sup> Or, in other words, the shining lotus is the flower of the world, which is the dream of Vishnu; and the god upon it, Brahma, the 'Creator', is an emanation from the world womb of Vishnu's cosmic sleep.

Sri, the goddess of Prosperity and Good Fortune, is mentioned in the Atharva Veda.<sup>54</sup> The Satapatha Brahmana says: "Prājapati was becoming heated (by fervid devotion) whilst creating living beings. From him, worn out and heated, Sri (Fortune and Beauty) came forth. She stood there resplendent, shining and trembling"...Sri (devi) is mentioned in the *Brihat Samhita* as the consort of Vishnu. On obtaining a particular boon, the "gods with Indra went to the Milk-Sea, and praised Him, who is marked by the Srivatsa, whose breast is beaming with the rays of the Kaustubha gem, Him the Lord of Sri, the incomprehensible and incomparable one, the life essence of all living

beings, Vishnu the highest soul, who is without beginning, and to whom no limit is known".<sup>55</sup>

Sri (later Lakshmi), the female aspect of Vishnu, is shown as floating on a lotus, and during the churning of the Ocean of Space she springs from the froth like Venus-Aphrodite, borne upon a lotus and holding another one in her hand.

Then seated on a lotus,  
Beauty's bright goddess, peerless Sri, arose  
Out of the waves. . .

The Mahabharata, however, relates that Sri-Lakshmi came out of a lotus springing from Vishnu's forehead and hence Lakshmi's epithet *Padma* (lotus-born). Sri is the older conception of Lakshmi and in the Sri-sukta (Rig Veda) she is described as the most lustrous. She drives out wretchedness and non-prosperity. In other words, she brings prosperity. Adjectives of Sri used in the Sri-sukta like 'gold-coloured' (*suvarna*), 'lotus-garlanded' (*padmamalini*), 'sitting on or holding the lotus' (*padma-sthita*, *padmahasta*) present the picture of a very beautiful goddess.

Sri-Lakshmi is the fertility-goddess of the prehistoric Indus Valley, for a figure unearthed from Mohenjo-daro assigned to the third millennium B.C. shows her as wide-hipped, uplifting the breasts with the hands, and wearing a lotus blossom<sup>56</sup> A sculpture of Sri-Lakshmi from Mathura, belonging to the Kusana period (1st Century A.D.) shows her exactly as found in the Indus Valley. The sculpture shows Sri-Lakshmi on a *Purnaghata* from which gush forth lotuses. The posture of her holding her breast with one hand shows that she supports the living beings, or, in other words, nourishes the world. On the back of the sculpture under reference are carved lotuses, one above the other. Standing amidst lotuses, she is prosperity and abundance personified. An archaic image of the Lotus-goddess (Sri) appears on a terracotta plaque from Basrah and dated about the third century B.C. She stands on a lotus pedestal with two lotus blossoms and two buds on her upper arms and pearl bracelets—Hindu ornaments such as are familiar in other monuments of the era. The elephants, her characteristic animal companions are missing; instead she has wings, a rare feature.<sup>57</sup>

The Puranas have made little contribution to the symbolism of the lotus, though the flower is mentioned in most of them in one context or other. As we are not interested in the literary value of the lotus, we shall pass on to Buddhism, which has contributed a deeper philosophical meaning to this ancient symbol of India.

### III. LOTUS IN BUDDHISM

The lotus in Buddhism stands for the miraculous birth of Siddhartha, the Buddha. The *Padma-ghata* symbol has been borrowed by the Buddhists from ancient Indian thought and the Nativity of their Master is represented by the lotus in early Buddhist art. The old symbolic lotus has been, from the beginning, adopted by the Buddhists to stand for the first among the Four Great Miracles of their Master. The *Lalita-Vistara* says: "In the same night in which the Bodhisattva ascended into his mother's womb a lotus sprang up rising from the waters below cleaving the earth over sixty-times hundred-thousand yojanas up to Brahma's heaven. And nobody saw the lotus but the leader, the best of men and the great Brahma set over ten times hundred-thousands. And all essence in quintessence of power immanent in the primordial matter of the three times thousand of worlds, all this lay below a drop of honey in this big lotus. . . And the Bodhisattva, as soon as he was born, came down upon earth. And at the moment when the Bodhisattva, the Great Being came down, a large lotus sprang up, splitting the earth asunder. . . standing upon this large lotus he surveyed the four cardinal points. . . Then he set forth and made seven steps. . . wherever the Bodhisattva thrust out his foot, there sprang up a lotus".<sup>58</sup> The *Mahavattu* simply compares "the purity of the Bodhisattva coming out of the womb with that of a lotus (*pankaja*) coming out of the water".<sup>59</sup> The *Buddha Charita*<sup>60</sup> makes the point clear and says that "Under each of which (seven steps) sprang up a lotus" (*abja-samudgatani*). The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-tsang has also recounted this tradition, for he says: "Where his feet had trod, there sprang up great lotus-flowers".<sup>61</sup> As there is no mention of the lotus springing up at the first seven steps of the infant Siddhartha in the Mahapadana Sutta, the miracle must be attributed to the influence of the

Brahmanical thought. According to the *Lalita Vistara* the Bodhisattva had five dreams in the night of the Great Departure, the second of which showed him how from his navel a lotus rose right up to the heaven of the Akanishtha gods. In the context of the Buddha being considered as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, this story has its foundation in the Bhagavata and other Puranas.<sup>62</sup>

The exuberance of lotuses in the Buddhist archaeology is entirely due to the mystic significance attached to that flower.<sup>63</sup> The Barhut railings have countless lotus medallions and half-medallions to cover the intersections of the perpendicular and horizontal bars. The craftsmen were not bankrupt in ideas, but their filling of every conceivable space with lotuses was due to the mysticism behind it.

Foucher says that it is evident that at first the lotus was not lavished on all comers. "The Old School never used it save for the miracles of the Nativity. . . Not content with seating the Buddha in the 'thousand-petalled' lotus specified in the texts, they place a lotus footstool under the feet of each of the numerous celestial beings who, poised in the air, witness the Master's victory over the heads of the rival sects. These extravagant pictures supplied, on the one hand, the prototype of the Serindian and Sino-Japanese images of Amitabha, surrounded by his assistants and seated in his paradise among soul-growing lotus-blossoms".<sup>64</sup> Buddhists have granted to the other members of their pantheon the emblem of lotus as a mark of their supernatural origin and divine nature. The use of the lotus symbol is, thus, an extension of this motif in the Buddha's Nativity.

The lotus is the most common place simile in Buddhist texts.<sup>65</sup> What are the true qualities of the lotus? Answer: 1. "Just O King, as the lotus, though it is born in the water, and grows up in the water, yet remains undefiled by the water (for no water adheres to it)". 2. "O King, when water has fallen on the lotus leaf it flows off from it, is dispersed and scattered away, stays not on it, adheres not to it". 3. The "lotus remains lifted up far above the water" and 4. "trembles when blown upon by the slightest breezes". Just as the lotus is "untarnished by the water, so is nirvana untarnished by any evil dispositions. This is the quality of the lotus inherent in Nirvana".<sup>66</sup> Lotus-ponds played an important role in Buddhist thought.<sup>67</sup>

As the lotus flowers arising from the dark waters of a lake are to be found in various stages of maturity—some with buds still deep under water, some nearing the surface, some already open, prepared to drink the rays of the Sun—just so, there might be among mankind and the gods a few prepared to hear, Buddhists believe.<sup>68</sup>

Out of the slime blooms the lotus serene—

Steadfast my heart though my life is unclean.<sup>69</sup>

The lotus has a place in Tibetan mysticism, for Lama Govinda says: "Just as a lotus grows from the darkness of the mud to the surface, opening its blossom only after it has raised itself beyond the surface, and remain unsullied from both the earth and water, which nourished it—in the same way the mind, born in the human body, unfolds its true qualities (petals) only when it has raised itself beyond the turbid floods of passions and ignorance, and transforms the dark powers of the depth into the radiant pure nectar of Enlightenment—Consciousness, the incomparable jewel in the lotus blossom".<sup>70</sup>

The Tibetan formula, *Om mani padme hun* (so be it, lotus-jewel, Amen) is addressed to Avalokitesvara, who is depicted as a hermaphrodite, seated upon the lotus of his father (the Buddha of meditation) or holding both the lotus and the jewel. This formula "presumably symbolises the creative cosmic action by self-generative power".<sup>71</sup> This mystic formula is used as a charm, as a prayer in certain rites, and as a pledge of salvation. The lotus signifies the universal being of the worshipper; the jewel, the individual being.<sup>72</sup>

Bodhisattva Manjusri was responsible for colonising Nepal and the part played by the lotus in that process may be stated here very briefly. The Valley of Nepal, in olden times, was filled with water and so became the lake Nagavasa, the abode of the holy *naga* Karkotaka. The lotus plant was conspicuous by its absence in the aquatic vegetation of the lake. The Buddha Vivasin once visited the lake and throwing in a grain of seed spoke thus: "When this seed shall produce a flower, it will give birth to Svayambhu, lord of Agnishtabhuvana, in the shape of a flame". Instantly from the seed in the centre of the lake a magic lotus sprang up of the size of a cart wheel, having ten thousand stamens, diamonds at the top, pearls at the foot and rubies in the middle. From the calyx rose a flame, purer

and more radiant than the sun. This was the Adi-Buddha who forthwith without symbol or emblem revealed himself in purest essence. After many years the Bodhisattva Manjusri appeared on the scene. Desiring to see the magic lotus in its entirety he caused through his magic powers the waters of the lake to drain off with the result that the bottom of the lake ran dry and was turned into fertile soil. From the soil the lotus rose and on this Svayambhu sat enthroned. Manjusri then, arriving at the root of the plant, heard nearby the soft bubbling of a well. He bent over and instantly Guhyesvari, the Lady of Mysteries, revealed herself in her awe-inspiring appearance.<sup>73</sup>

Manjusri, according to a Chinese legend, was brought into existence by Gautama Buddha by emitting a ray from his forehead which pierced a Jambu-tree. A lotus sprang from the tree and from the interior of the flower was born the 'prince of sages', Arya Manjusri. He manifested himself at Panchasirsha in the Shansi province to the instruction received by him from Gautama Buddha. He carried a book and a lotus.<sup>74</sup> Manjusri is represented sitting in his lotus seat not only at Sarnath, but also in Java and Tibet.

In the Buddhist Paradise of Sukhavati, the goal of popular Mahayana Buddhists, where no women exist, everyone is born as a god upon a lotus-flower and there are lotus-flowered *manigems*. "They are in that world Sukhavati, through the hearing of Buddha's name, and through the serenity of thought only; they do not, however, appear sitting cross-legged in the flowers of the lotus, being born miraculously but dwell only in the calyx of the lotus-flowers."

"...by not being tainted by the whole  
World, they are like lotuses".<sup>75</sup>

In the Chinese Buddhist pictorial concept of the Western Heaven, there is a Sacred Lake of Lotuses. Each soul is conceived as having its particular lotus blossoming on the bosom of the Sacred Lake, where it is received after death and where it rests in a sort of painless purgatory until the appointed time for its opening. The flowers thrive or droop according to the piety of the individual during his life on earth, and for the particularly devout they open immediately when he dies, admitting the soul at once to the divine presence. Chinese paintings of the Western Heaven (as it was interpreted by the Lotus or

Amidist School of Buddhism) depict a truly delightful paradise. Lotus blossoms of varied hues, said to be as large as wheels, float on the conventionalised wave pattern of the water. In the centre Amitabha is enthroned, surrounded by Bodhisattvas. Beautiful pavilions float on conventionalised clouds, vases smoke with fragrant incense, music-clouds play, and jewel flowers rain down through the air.<sup>76</sup>

Buddhist hells are also named after the lotus: Padma, Mahapadma, Pundarika etc. These appear to be named after the flower-shaped boils which torment their inmates.<sup>77</sup>

In a Chinese Buddhist legend lotuses float in mid-air in the City of Padma (Paduma), 10 yojanas long and seven yojanas broad, with ground even and smooth. Bhadra, a dark-clad water girl of this city secretly put a seven-stalked *utpala* flower in her pitcher and sold it to Megha, a Brahman youth, on condition that he would marry her for defying the royal ban on selling any flower during the visit of Dipankara Buddha. Megha cast the flower above Dipankara, taking the vow, "If in future time I shall become Buddha, and teach the Law just as this Buddha, and receive the reverence of all men in like manner, then let these flowers remain in mid-air, the leaves hanging downwards and the flowers standing upwards, crowning the canopy that shades the head of Buddha and moves as he moves, and rests as he rests". And so it was, and Megha's vow was fulfilled.<sup>78</sup>

The lotus is used to denominate the highest number known to Buddhist computators, namely, one followed by 119 ciphers, which is called a Padma, or in Pali, *Paduma*, whilst the white lotus, *Pundarika*, gives one followed by 112 ciphers.<sup>79</sup> Mahapadma is the name of the elephant that supports the world in the south.<sup>80</sup> The white lotus, *Pundarika*, gives its name to one of the great canonical texts of Mahayanist Buddhism, the *Saddharmapundarika*, or 'Lotus of the True Law'. This is a theistic development of the Buddha theory which represents Sakyamuni as the Supreme god of Universe and possessor of everlasting life.

#### IV. LOTUS IN ARCHITECTURE

The lotus-pattern has played an important part in the ancient Indian village and town-planning, for we find such human settle-



ments named *Padmaka* (having the form of a lotus leaf).<sup>81</sup> There is an excellent relief at Amaravati depicting the City of Sravasti where the moats and gates are shown in the shape of lotus flowers.<sup>82</sup> Kautilya, in his *Arthasastra*, has prescribed that in the centre of the parapets of forts, there should be constructed a deep lotus pool. *Padma-Garbha* is the name for a site plan in which the whole area is divided into 256 squares.

*Abja-kanta* (ten), *Kamala* (six), *Pundarika* (seven), *Pushkara* (?), *Padma* (one), and *Mahapadma* (?) are some of the building-types mentioned in the Silpasastras of India, the numbers in the brackets indicating their storeys.<sup>83-84</sup> *Mahapadma* is a round building. *Ambuja* (cyma), *Kumud-bandha* (a class of bases), *Mahambuja* (a large cyma, a moulding of the pedestal) etc. are some of the terms used in Indian architectural texts, named after the lotus.<sup>85</sup> *Padma* is also the name of a component part of the column (*stambha*) mentioned in Indian texts.

*Ionic Capital*: That the lotus-motif is the basic element in the Ionic capital and the domes of mosques is now admitted by historians of architecture. The volutes, which are the distinguishing feature of the Ionic capital, are derived from the downward curling calyx leaves of a conventional form of lotus used in Oriental decoration.<sup>86</sup> The lotus-motif travelled to Egypt via Persia at an early date, for the flower is not indigenous to the Land of the Pyramids. Vedic references to the blue lotus (*Pushkara*) are the earliest written record ever found. The entire flower is found on Cypriote vases and on Cypriote tombstones, dating from the 6th and 7th centuries B.C.<sup>87</sup>

*Muhammadian Dome*: The dome is the distinguishing feature of Muslim architecture. That the dome is nothing but the *Mahapadma* design is now recognised by all. "The similarity in form of the dormer windows and gable-ends of Indian cottages, when roofed with bent bamboo rafters, to the Sun's disc as it touches the horizon was doubtless the reason why they were so extensively used as a decorative motif in early Indian art... But that Persia borrowed the lotus dome from India is certain, for bent bamboo roof construction is peculiarly an Indian method. Its application to dome is clearly indicated in the domed canopy shown on the Sanchi gateway".<sup>88</sup>

The appropriate name, 'lotus dome', is not Havell's invention: it was given to it by Indian craftsmen who worshipped the

rising Sun as the mystic world-lotus and carved its petals at the neck (*griva*) and crown (*maha-padma*) of the dome. "The Indian type of bulbous or lotus dome which characterises Mogul buildings after Akbar's time most probably was brought to Delhi from Bijapur( but it originated in Buddhist India—together with the 'horse-shoe' or lotus-leaf arch from which its construction principle is derived—from a dome of light construction built in an elastic framework, like the thatched roofs of Bengal, tied together internally by the *maha-padma*, or great lotus—i.e., eight or radiating bamboo or wooden ties which suggested to the builder the mystic lotus. He therefore emphasised the symbolism externally by a band of lotus petals round the neck of the dome, and repeated the lotus flower on the top of it, where the ends of the ribs were joined to the finial. This lotus symbolism is almost universal in the bulbous domes of India, and marks distinctly their native origin, for it would never have entered into the mind of a foreign Musalman craftsman, except one who inherited the traditions of Buddhist India".<sup>89</sup>

*Hindu Temple Architecture* : The lotus exerted little influence on the evolution of Indian temple architecture, for they are, in most cases, the proto-types of the Vedic fire-altar. However, the lotus has an honoured place in different parts of the temple itself. Varahamihira in his *Brihat Samhita* says that the gods at all times take delight in grounds where nearby there are "lakes where groups of lotuses like umbrellas ward off the sun's darting beams, and the waters receive access of brightness by the rows of white water-lilies pushed aside by the shoulders of swans".<sup>90</sup> Temples are, therefore, built in such natural surroundings.

Varahamihira describes twenty kinds of shrines among which he includes the *Padma*.<sup>91</sup> "The *Padma* (i.e., lotus) has the shape of a lotus, measures 8 cubits, has one square, and only one storey".<sup>92</sup> Silpasastras specify rules for the construction of 36 kinds of *Rekha* temples and two of them are named after the lotus, i.e., *Padmakara* and *Padmasila*.<sup>93</sup> Among the *Bhadra* temples, *Nalini Bhadra* is an important kind.<sup>94</sup>

Among the 64 kinds of *adhithanas* (basements) three, namely, *Kumuda*, *Padma-bandha*, and *Padma-kesara*, are named after the lotus.<sup>95</sup> *Padma-bandha* is a class of bases comprising four types which differ from one another in height and in the addition or omission of some mouldings.<sup>96</sup>

*Padma(ka)* is the name of a kind of moulding. "The moulding, called *Padma* (*abja*, *ambuja* or *Saroruha*, etc.) literary lotus, is supposed to resemble a petal of that flower. It is a sort of compound figure, partly convex and partly concave, and its section is composed of two opposite curves, meeting at the bisecting point of a line drawn between the points of recess and projection, and very much resembling the 'cyma recta' and 'cyma reversa' of the Western architecture. The moulding is distinguished into greater and less, and forms the principal ornaments of Indian architecture. It is generally employed, in detached pairs, in bases and cornices, one facing the other in opposite direction, and is formed upright or the reverse according to its situation, either as a crowning member of the former in the supporting ornament of the latter. The concave part of it, when placed with its bottom reversed, is often designed as to project forward or rise up, after having touched as it were, the fillet below, with a small perpendicular curvature, resembling in shape the petal of the lotus, with its pointed head somewhat inclined towards the top. In some specimens, this moulding is placed at the base of columns, and looks very much like an apophyge or ogee of the Ionic and Corinthian orders being formed either with a curved line having more or less convexity at the top, or with an upright tangent to the concave part below. It is sometimes made exactly in the form of an ovolo of the Western architects".<sup>97</sup>

*Padmakanta* is a special type of pillar. It is based on a seat (*asana*), plinth or lotus (*cyma*). Its cornice or edge of the capital is decorated with opening buds. Its base is decorated with a bridge-like moulding (*palika*). The ornamental fillets are constructed and two *angulas* (1½ inches) on all sides are adorned with foliage, jewels, flowers, etc.<sup>98</sup>

The tall spire of the Hindu temple is called *Sikhara* in architecture. It is pierced by the sun-windows, which are now only ornamental as the shrine is no longer a Vedic fire-chamber, serving the admirable purpose of a chimney. The *Sikhara* forms the most conspicuous landmark of many a temple in the countryside of India. These spires are invariably crowned by the *Amalaka*, the pericarp of the blue lotus, which is the flower of Vishnu-Narayana, the preserver of the universe, and specially the patron deity of Kshatriya kings.<sup>99</sup> *Amalaka* is a massive

circular stone supporting a vase known as *Kalasa*. In *Sikhara* it has a structural purpose to serve, while in other places it is a mere ornament. There is no doubt that its origin lay in the popularity of the lotus as a Buddhist and Hindu symbol.<sup>100</sup> *Amalasara* is the name of the flat scalloped cushion or cog-wheel member surmounting the *Sikhara*.

*Vimana* is the tower surmounting the *garbhagriha* (sanctuary), which is made in the centre of a temple.<sup>101</sup> Fifty-two *Vimana* types are described in the *Padma Samhita/Padma Tantra*.<sup>102</sup> *Pushkara* and *Kamalamandala*, obviously named after the lotus, are included among them.<sup>103</sup>

There are elaborate rules for the construction of pedestals (*pistha*, *pitha*, *prishtha*) in temples on which the presiding deity is installed. Eight (*Padma*, *Bhadra*, *Bedi*, *Suthira*, *Khura/Kurma*, *Kumbha* and *Parijangha*) kinds of pedestals are described in Indian Silpasastra texts and *Padma* occupies the first place among them.<sup>104</sup> The *Padma Pitha* is used in the *Maha-Kailasa*, *Garuda*, *Dui-Padma*, *Sreetaru*, *Mahameru* and *Meru* temples. The specifications of the *Padma Pitha* are given in the *Bhubanapradipa*, an Orissan text on architecture. Unfortunately, "it has not been possible for us to arrive at any definite conclusion regarding the form of the *Padma Pitha* for no satisfactory explanation of the terms *dalajhara* and *ardhaphera* are available. According to the Silpins, a *Padma Pitha* should be composed of three elements, the higher ones being set backwards".<sup>105</sup> The *Padma Pitha* (lotus-throne) upon which a deity sits or stands, is round and adorned with either a single or double row of lotus leaves round the basal layer, which may be round or quadrangular. The seat may also consist of the pericarp of a lotus. The *Padma* is often equipped with a *Karnika* as a footstool and often has a *prabhavali*. *Pithapadma*, *Kamalasana*, and *Padmasana* are the other names for *Padma Pitha*.<sup>106</sup>

"Thinking that this throne on which the deity rests, golden like Mount Meru, was surrounded by the imperishable (seven) primeval mountains covered by snow, (the king) himself caused an exceedingly resplendent silver lotus with brilliant wide opened petals to be made for the worship of Pasupati", says Yayadeva's inscription. ("The poet tries to prove that the lotus resembles the shrine of Pasupati. As the latter is of gold, so the centre also of the lotus is golden, and as the temple is surrounded by

snowy mountains, so the petals of the lotus are made of silver").<sup>107</sup>

The lotus (*Padma*) is associated with an image either as its *vahana* or attribute. The *vahana* need not necessarily be a mount, but can also be a *pitha* (seat). It is an attribute when it is carried in one hand or worn on other parts of the body. If it is connected with an image in any way, it is taken to be an attribute of the deity.

## V. LOTUS IN ICONOGRAPHY

### A. HINDU GODS :

The lotus is the most important attribute of Hindu divinities from the highest to the lowest. Sometimes it is conventionalised as a seat or as a pedestal on which divine or sacred beings rest in a sitting or standing posture. Brahma is invariably seated on Vishnu's navel-lotus. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva with their consorts Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Parvati are represented on a lotus seat in iconography. A two-armed goddess who carries a *Padma* can very often be identified as Lakshmi or one of Her manifestations like Bhu, Riddhi etc. and one such goddess without any attribute may be regarded as Parvati. Agni (god of Fire), Pavana (god of Wind), Ganesa (god of Wisdom), Rama (Vishnu's incarnation) and the demon Ravana have lotus seats. Vishnu holds a lotus in one of his four hands. A lotus pedestal also serves as a stand for the image of the god Indra, of Vishnu, and nearly all his incarnations, and of the sun-god Surya.<sup>108</sup>

The *Vishnu Dharmottara Puṛana* is our leading authority for the iconography of the Hindu pantheon and has given the following details of the lotus in iconography.

"The lotus (may be) of gold, silver, copper or some other material, two cubits (*hasta*) in measurement, with beautiful filament and divided into eight parts. The pericarps should be round and raised by one-eighth part and clinging to the petals. Round the pericarp, surcharged with round seeds, measuring a *vava* only, there should be fifty-two petals. Verily, that should be made in width by the one-sixteenth part (i.e., the distance between pericarp and petals horizontally where the pericarp no longer clings to them should be the 16th part of two

*hastas*). The rest one should fill up with eight very glossy petals (i.e., the outer circle of petals). Then its installation should be made and on it one should worship the gods. Thereon one should worship Brahma, thereon one should adore Hari and Rudra as well as Sri. On it (again) one should worship Indra, the lord of the world and king of the gods, and thereon one should adore the sun and the moon. That god only and no other should be worshipped on the lotus, by contemplating whom in mind, it was set up.

“Thus has been narrated to you ~~the~~ nature of the lotus. The whole of the earth is symbolised **by** the lotus. And on it the gods should be worshipped; being worshipped on it, they become propitious”.<sup>109</sup>

The following gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon have the lotus as their characteristics or attributes:

Aniruddha : “Aniruddha should have the body colour of the lotus petal”.<sup>110</sup> Aniruddha is an aspect of Vishnu; hence he holds a *Padma* in one of his hands.

Bala : “Bala (son of Yama) should be of the colour of the lotus leaf”.<sup>111</sup>

Baladeva : “Baladeva must be made having a plough in his hand, with eyes lively from drink, and wearing a single ear-ring. His complexion is fair like a conch shell, the moon, or lotus fibre”.<sup>112</sup> Baladeva is an epithet of Balarama.

Bhu : Bhu or Mahi. “In the hands of Bhu (or Mahi, Earth-goddess) should be held...a lotus: lotus in the hand is wealth (artha)”.<sup>113</sup> Bhu is considered to be the second wife of Vishnu. She is installed on a *Padma Pitha* and her attribute is a *Nilotpala* or *Padma*.<sup>114</sup> She holds a lotus in her both hands. Bhu is seldom distinguished from Lakshmi. Sri, Bhu, and Lakshmi are the different forms of the primeval Earth-goddess.

Brahma : “Brahma should be rendered seated on a lotus-leaf-seat”.<sup>115</sup> “Brahma (the Creator) has four faces, a drinking pot in his hand and is seated on a lotus”.<sup>116</sup> As *Loka-pala*, Brahma has a lotus in his hand.

Brahma is often shown in Indian art seated in Yogi fashion as the Great Magician upon the mystic lotus which springs from the navel of Vishnu-Narayana, the Eternal Spirit. He also appears riding on the swan or wild goose, the king of the lotus-pool, whose Sanskrit name, *hamsa*, is convertible into the mystic formula, "SA-HAM—I am he", that is Brahma, according to Havell.<sup>117</sup>

Although Brahma is considered as the Creator of the universe, he is seldom portrayed as a Being outside and above his creation. Brahma and the universe are one Being; Brahma is the universe, and every atom in cosmos is part and parcel of Brahma. Brahma is reborn on the lotus from the navel of Vishnu with each succeeding *Kalpa* or day of Brahma (12,000 heavenly years). He is called *Kamalasana* as he sits on the lotus which springs from the navel of Vishnu.

Devaki : "Devaki should be pale-red like the tip of the *Padma*-leaf".<sup>118</sup> Devaki is the mother of (Sri) Krishna and Balarama.

Devi : Amba (4), Ambika, Bhadrakali (18), Bhuvaneswari, Gauri (2), Kali (2), Sarvamangala (4), Sveta, Tulasidevi (2), and Uma (4) are some of the forms of Devi, the figures in the brackets indicating the number of her hands. Bhuvaneswari and Sveta have lotus seats; others hold the lotus in their hands. Lotus is not absent in her terrible forms like Durga, Mahishasuramardini etc.<sup>119</sup>

Dikpalas : Among the *Ashta-Dikpalas* (Guardians of Quarters), Indra's symbol is the lotus and his consort Sachi carries a lotus. Agni, if shown as 4-handed, holds a lotus in one of the hands. Varuna and Kubera are the other *Dikpalas* who have the symbol of lotus.<sup>120</sup>

Dhumorna : "Dhumorna (wife of Yama) should have the colour of the blue lotus (and she) should be placed on the left lap (of Yama)".<sup>121</sup> Dhumorna, 'shroud of smoke', i.e., the smoke of the funeral pyres, is personified as one of the wives of Yama, the ruler of the dead. Yama, son of Vivasvat, is mentioned in the Rig Veda.<sup>122</sup>

Ekanamsa : "The goddess Ekanamsa should be made between Baladeva and Krishna, with the left hand resting on her hip and with the other holding a lotus". "If it is intended to make her four-armed, then let her hold a lotus and a book on her left hands, while, on the right, she confers a boon on the supplicants with one hand and holds a rosary in the other. The left hands of an eight-armed Ekanamsa should contain a drinking pot, a bow, a lotus, and a book; the right arms a gift, an arrow, a mirror, and rosary".<sup>123</sup> Ekanamsa has suffered eclipse since the days of Varahamihira; though the great astronomer and astrologer is very much sought after even these days.

Ganapati : The *Brihaddharma Purana* says Ganapati has four hands. When he was coronated by gods, Sarasvati presented him with a stylus (*lekhani*), Brahma a garland of beads (*japamala*), Indra the tusk of an elephant, Padmavati a lotus, Siva a tiger skin, Brihaspati a sacred thread and the earth the rat as his carrier.<sup>124</sup> The *Matsya* and *Agni Puranas* specify a lotus as one of the attributes of Ganapati.<sup>125</sup> Ganapati has no less than 32 forms in the Brahmanical tradition and an equally bewildering number in Tamil Nadu. Bala, Tharuna, Vecra, Sakti, Dwija, Siddhi, Ucchishta, Vighna, Kshipra, Heramba, Lakshmi, Maha, Vijaya, Nirutta, Oordhva, Ekakshara, Vara, Thranyakshara, Kshipraprasada, Ekadanta, Srishti, Utthanda, Rana Mosana, Devi Mugha, Singha, Yoga, Durga and Sankatahara Ganapatis belong to the Brahmanical hierarchical list. Pillayar, Makkan, Vinayakan, Ganapati, and Visvaksena are popular in Tamil Nadu. Lakshmi-Ganapati, Ucchishta-Ganapati and Maha-Ganapati have the lotus in hand. Uchhishta-Ganapati is seated on a lotus.<sup>126</sup>

Ganga : "Lotus is in the hand of heavenly Ganga".<sup>127</sup>

Gauri : "Gauri (Varuna's wife) should have a blue lotus, when represented with 2 hands".<sup>128</sup> She is shown as seated on a lotus-pedestal in this form and when six-handed, she holds a lotus in one of her hands.<sup>129</sup>

Hayagriva : "Hayagriva (god) should be with eight hands and in four of his hands should show the conch, the wheel, the mace, and the lotus"<sup>130</sup>. Hayagriva is an incarnation of Vishnu: hence these attributes.



Hiranyakasipu : "The demon Hiranyakasipu should be of the colour of the blue lotus and placed on the knee of the god (Narasimha)".<sup>131</sup>

Krishna : Krishna (= Sri Krishna) "should be very beautiful resembling in colour the blue lotus-leaf... Krishna should be of the colour of the blue lotus-petal and carrying the wheel".<sup>132</sup>

Kubera : "Kubera (god of Wealth) should be made of the colour of the lotus-leaf. His treasure bags should be made in the form of conch and lotus. A conch and a lotus, rendered as receptacles, should represent two hoards. His face is inclined sideways between the conch and lotus. By their shape the conch and the lotus should be known as hoards. (Hence) by them (the lotus and the conch) uninterrupted (stream of wealth) is given to".<sup>133</sup> The Mahabharata, in its account of Mount Kailasa, the abode of Kubera, describes his lake Nalini and his river Mandakini as covered with golden lotuses. As a personification, *Padmanidhi* is an attendant of Kubera.

Lakshmi : "Lakshmi, wife of Vishnu (should be represented) with two hands, unrivalled in point of beauty on earth and carrying beautiful lotuses in hand. The goddess separately should be represented with four hands on an auspicious throne. On her throne shall be a lotus with beautiful pericarps and eight petals... the goddess should be seated like Vinayaka on the pericarp... in her right hand should be a conspicuous lotus with a long stalk, touching the end of the armlet... Above the head of the goddess should be a charming lotus... the lotus in the hand of Lakshmi to be the nectarine essence of water... or (the goddess) should be made standing on a lotus, with two hands, carrying the conch and the lotus, beautiful in all her limbs... of the colour of the interior of the lotus, glorious and wet".<sup>134</sup>

Bhu and Lakshmi are both aspects of Vishnu's two-fold power on earth—Bhu, His power of enjoyment (*bhogatrasakti*) and Lakshmi, His power of nourishment (*pushtisakti*). Lakshmi takes on three forms (*rupayana*)—*Yogalakshmi*. "within the mole of Vishnu's Chest", *Bhogalakshmi*, by His side, and *Viralakshmi*, as She is seen as a

separate icon in her own shrine. The first two forms are worshipped along with Vishnu Himself; the third form is to be worshipped with a separate liturgy.<sup>135</sup>

Lakshmi is referred to in the Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda.<sup>136</sup> She is described as born of the lotus, standing on the lotus, and garlanded with lotuses. She is praised (as beautiful women have been ever since) as being of the hue of the lotus, lotus-eyed, lotus-thighed, lotus-decked. She is one of the earlier figures to appear from the Milky Ocean when it was churned. She is constantly associated with the waters (which are feminine and life-giving) and with the White Elephant. Padma is the name of an elephant in her retinue. Carvings of Lakshmi from at least the first century B.C. to the present day characteristically show the goddess standing upon the lotus, flanked by elephants who pour water from their trunks over her and the lotus which she holds.

Lakshmi, as the supreme goddess, is called Mahalakshmi. She takes several forms like Arya, Bharati, Brahmani, Isvari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasarasvati, Mahavan, Mahavidya, Sarasvati, Vedagarbha etc., all of whom are sculptured with four hands and holding a lotus in one of her hands.<sup>136a</sup>

Narasimha : "Narasimha (Man-lion incarnation of Vishnu) . . . the lord with a body full of flame and carrying a conch and a lotus, (has) his feet slightly raised . . . Or Narasimha should be beautified by hands holding the conch, the wheel, the club and the lotus".<sup>136b</sup> Narasimha has many a form. As Girija-Narasimha the god sits on a lotus seat and as Sthanu-Narasimha He holds a lotus in one of his four hands.<sup>137</sup>

Padmanabha : "Padmanabha, the lord of the worlds, wherein Brahma, the god of gods, was born from the lotus face. One of the (four) hands of Padmanabha should be holding a sprout of the Santana (tree) . . . On the lotus containing the entire earth (and) sprung from his navel-pool in front of the goddess (Lakshmi) Brahma should be shown. Clinging to the lotus-stalks should be Madhu and Kaitabha".<sup>138</sup> Padmanabha means either 'he who has a lotus navel' or 'he whose navel is the world-lotus'.

Rukmini : Rukmini, wife of Krishna, "should be brown (colour) carrying in her left hand a blue lotus".<sup>139</sup> Rukmini was the sister of Rukmin, eldest son of Bhishmaka, King of Vidarbha. She fell in love with Krishna, but Rukmin was reluctant to agree to the match. She was, therefore, betrothed to Sisupala, King of Chedi, but before the wedding could take place, Krishna abducted her.

Sakra : Sakra (an epithet of Indra) "should be done with four hands and Sachi (his wife) with two. On the right hand of Sakra should be placed the lotus and the elephant goad".<sup>140</sup>

Samba : Samba should be lotus-coloured.<sup>141</sup> He was the son of Krishna and Jambavati.

Sapta-Matrikas : Among the *Sapta-Matrikas* (Seven Divine Mothers), Kumari (12-handed) and Vaishnavi (6-handed) have the attribute of lotus.

Sarasvati : Sarasvati, the goddess of Learning, should be made 'lotus-eyed'.<sup>142</sup> Sarasvati, ('the flowering one') was a river in the Vedic times. Later she was represented as the wife of Brahma, having *Padma* as her *Vahana* and the attribute of *Padma* or *Pundarika*. "Brahma's Sakti, or active principle in nature, is Sarasvati, the lady of the lotus-pool, goddess of speech and learning. Her flower, the pink or red lotus, whose petals unfold at the magic touch of the sun's first rays, is the symbol of the womb of the universe, Hiranyagarbha, hidden in the depths of the cosmic waters from which Brahma, self-created sprung".<sup>143</sup>

Sita : Sita (wife of Sri Rama) holds a blue lotus in her left hand.

Siva : "Mirror and lotus should be known (being held) in the hands of the Devi face (i.e., *Umavakra* of Siva). Pure knowledge is the mirror and asceticism the lotus".<sup>144</sup> Siva holds out the lotus-twined *lingam* to his goddess *Sakti*. As Kali, she holds in one hand the lotus symbol of eternal generation.

Siva has several forms. In His *Ardhanarisvara* form, His foot rests on a lotus and the left hand of Uma holds a blue lotus.<sup>145</sup> In His *Alingana-Murti* form, Uma holds a red lotus in her right hand.<sup>146</sup> Benign Siva as *Uma-Mahesvara-Murti* or *Uma-Sahita-Murti* holds a blue lotus

in his right hand.<sup>147</sup> Siva as *Dakshina-Murti* (as the Great Teacher) is seated on a lotus. The *Vyakhana-Dakshina-Murti*, besides being seated on a lotus, holds in his back left hand a lotus.<sup>148</sup> As *Yoga-Dakshina-Murti*, He has *Padmasana* (seated cross-legged) and holds in His back left hand a lotus.<sup>149</sup> Siva as *Mahevara* holds a lotus in one of his ten hands.<sup>150</sup> *Sada-Siva Murti* Siva has *Padmasana* and holds a blue lotus in His left hand.<sup>151</sup> Rudra, the Vedic proto-type of Siva, has 11 forms. Of these *Ekadasa Rudras*, the 16-handed *Aparajita* and *Suresvara* hold a lotus in one of their left hands.<sup>152</sup>

Sky : "The sky is of the colour of the blue lotus".<sup>153</sup>

Subrahmanya : Subrahmanya (Skanda, Kartikeya, Shanmukha etc.) is more popular in South India. As two-handed Balaswami Subrahmanya (shown separately or with his parents, Siva and Parvati), he holds a lotus in his hand.<sup>154</sup> Two or four-handed Subrahmanya also holds a lotus.<sup>155</sup> As ten-handed *Senapati*, six-faced Subrahmanya holds a lotus in one of his hands.<sup>156</sup> The 12-handed *Senani* Subrahmanya also holds a lotus in one of his hands.<sup>157</sup> The colour of the 12-handed, 6-faced *Saravanabhava*, is a full-blown lotus and the lotus is one of his attributes.<sup>158</sup> Four-faced, eight-handed *Saurabheya* Subrahmanya sits on a lotus and holds one in his right hand.<sup>159</sup> The eight-handed and twelve-handed *Tamasik* (fighting posture) Subrahmanyas hold a lotus in their right hand. The two-armed *Sattvik* (seated in Yoga posture) Subrahmanya has a lotus in his right hand.<sup>160</sup>

Sun : Sun (Aditya). "The sun ought to be made with elevated nose, forehead, lower leg, thigh, cheek and breast, and clad in the dress of the Northerners, so as to be covered from the feet upwards to the bosom. He holds two lotuses growing out of his hands, wears a diadem and a necklace hanging down, has his face adorned with ear-rings, and a girdle round his waist".<sup>161</sup> The Sun is *kamalodaradhyuti-mukhah*.

"Ravi or the Sun should be set at the S. E. corner (of a temple). His chariot has one wheel. On a lotus, He sits in the *Padmasana*. And (his chariot has) seven horses. The deity has two arms. His colour is like that of the

lotus (*Padma*) flower. His hand is disposed in the *abhaya mudra*".<sup>162</sup>

There are 12 forms of the Sun, viz., Aryaman, Bhaja, Dhatri, Mitra, Pushan, Rudra, Savittar, Surya, Tvashtri, Varuna, Vishnu, and Vivasvan. Among them Pushan has the lotus in all His four hands. Others have the attribute of a lotus in common with other objects. Vishnu-Surya has the Wheel in one hand and the lotus in the rest of the three.<sup>163</sup>

Varaha : "Clinging to (Varaha's) left arm Earth should be represented as a woman. In that hand which supports the goddess (Earth) there should be the conch and his other hands should be rendered carrying the lotus, the wheel, and the mace".<sup>164</sup> *Varahavatara* (Boar-incarnation) of Vishnu is described here.

Varuna : "In the right hand of the god (Varuna) should be placed a lotus...The lotus represents good luck. The lotus in the hand of Varuna (stands) for the law of Brahma".<sup>165</sup>

Varuna was one of the principal gods of the Rig Vedic Aryans like Agni, Mitra and Indra. "In Varuna as the sky god a higher plane is reached. He sits enthroned in the vault of heaven; the Sun and stars are the eyes with which he sees all that passes on earth. He, more than of his brother gods, realizes the conception of personal holiness as an ideal for mankind".<sup>166</sup> He was reduced to a *Dikpala* to whom the overlordship of the quarters of waters was assigned in the post-Vedic period. Varuna has the attribute of *Padma*, and as Aditya he has two *Padmas*, His symbol is the lotus and if he is represented as 4-handed, he holds a lotus in one of them.

Vasus : Among the Eight *Vasus* (demi-gods of the Rig Veda), the 4-handed Dhara and Soma hold the lotus in their right hand.

Vasudeva : "The lotus over the head of this (god—Vasudeva) should have charming pericarps. (One) should put into the right hand of the god a full-blown lotus and a conch should be placed in the left-hand...the lotus (should) be placed in the middle of the legs to the water...Vaṣudeva, sitting on the Garuda, carries the lotus in

hand...Trivikrama's conch, wheel, club and a lotus should be made in their natural conditions".<sup>167</sup>

Vishnu : The lotus (*Padma*) is invariably the symbol of Vishnu in his various *avataaras* (incarnations) and manifestations. He is more often represented as four-handed; seldom two-handed. As we have already treated him in his Balarama, Narasimha, and Varaha *avataaras*, and described him as Aniruddha, Krishna and Vasudeva, it remains to enumerate the other forms. As *Ananta-Sayin*, he has the lotus symbol. As 4-handed Pradyumna, Vishnu holds a lotus in one of his hands. The symbol of Nara-Narayana is the lotus (*Mahapadma*). Vishnu, as Dattatreya and Dhanvantari, hold two lotuses, if represented as 4-handed; otherwise a lotus in one of the two hands. Vishnu as Kapila and Lakshmi-Narayana has the lotus-seat (*Padmasana*). Venkatesh (a form of Vishnu) carries a lotus in his hand. Lotus-stalk is the symbol of Vittal, another form of the god. A lotus is carried on either side of Vishnu as Yogasanamurti. As Yogisvara, he sits on a lotus. The Earth-goddess holds a blue lotus in her hand in the Pralaya-Varaha *avatara* of Vishnu. Sri(devi) holds a lotus in her right hand when she is with Vishnu as Bhogasthana-Murti.<sup>168</sup>

There are 24 ways in which the images of Vishnu are made in accordance with the significance of his name. The position of the conch, mace, lotus, and wheel, common to all these 24 forms, is different. We mention these attributes (C = Conch, M = Mace, L = Lotus & W = Wheel) below in the order of Upper (a) Right and (b) Left, and Lower (a) Left (b) Right hands along with the meaning of his names: Achyuta (the never-failing—LWCM), Adhakhaja (sphere of the universe—MCWL), Aniruddha (the unopposed—MCLW), Damodara (self-restrained—CMWL), Govinda (rescuer of the earth—MLCW), Hari (remover of sorrows—CWLM), Hrishikesa (lord of the senses—WMCL), Janardana (the rewarder—LWCM), Kesava (the long-haired—CWML), Krishna (the dark one—MLWC), Madhava (lord of knowledge—WCLM), Madhusudana (destroyer of Madhu—CLMW), Narasimha (man-lion—LMCW), Narayana (the universal abode—LMWC), Pad-

manabha (whose navel is the lotus—LCMW), Bradyumna (the richest—CWML), Purushottama (the best of men—LCMW), Sankarshana (resorber—CLWM), Sridhara (bearer of fortune—WLCM), Trivikrama (conqueror of three worlds—MWCL), Upendra (brother of Indra—CMWL), Vamana (the dwarf—WMLC), Vasudeva (the indweller—WCML) and Vishnu (the pervader—LCWM)<sup>169</sup>

Vyoma: Vyoma (Upper Regions). "On the topmost position (of Vyoma), there (one) should place the lotus with eight beautiful petals on the pericarp in its midst, the Sun-god. On the petals (one) should place the *Dikpalas*... Therefore (the learned) know the lotus (to be) the upper regions, all the chief gods are close at hand there".<sup>170</sup>

Yamuna: "*Utpala* (blue lotus) belongs to the ancient (river) Yamuna".<sup>171</sup>

Yasoda: Yasoda (foster-mother of Krishna) should be rendered carrying a *Padma* in her hand.<sup>172</sup>

Yuyudhana: "Yuyudhana (an epithet of Indra) should have the colour resembling the womb of the *Utpala* (flower)".<sup>173</sup>

There is no doubt that the lotus, being an aquatic plant, associated itself with the gods of that element. Vishnu is the most important god in Hinduism today and he and his different forms and manifestations have invariably the lotus either as a symbol or attribute. Siva, the next important god among the Hindu Trinity, uses the lotus sparingly as his symbol, as he had his origin in the mountain regions where the flower does not grow, except in ponds. Moreover, he is not as benign as Vishnu. The *Sakti* of Vishnu and her different forms like Sri, Bhu, Lakshmi etc. should have the lotus, as she is, after all, feminine aspect of the god. The *Sakti* of Siva, like Uma, Parvati, etc., like the god, uses the lotus-symbol sparingly. We may, therefore, postulate that the lotus is the symbol of Hindu gods and goddesses who are benign. This rule holds good in Buddhism.

B. *BUDDHIST GODS*: The lotus (*Padma*) is a "pledge of salvation and symbol of divine origin" in Buddhism. Further, the lotus-flower, by reproducing from its own matrix, rather than the soil, is a symbol of spontaneous generation. That is why the lotus which serves as a throne for the Buddhas indicates divine birth. As a symbol of the Matrix-World, the lotus in the

esoteric Vajrayana Buddhism signifies the female principle or the female genitals, as a substitute for the Hindu *yonī*.<sup>174</sup>

"The lotus throne of the Buddha is nearly always represented in Indian art with the outer fringe of petals turned downwards, and the whole flower is frequently shown naturalistically with the petals turned down upon the stalk".<sup>175</sup> As we have already described the lotus-vase as the *Purna-ghata* symbol of everyday Indian life, it is unnecessary to dwell at length any more here. The open flowers and turned down petals suggested to Indian craftsmen the heavenly vault supported by the holy mountain, the pivot of the universe.

"In Brahmanical symbolism the mystery of the sunrise is represented by the lotus upon which Brahma, the Creator, sits enthroned, springing from the navel of Narayana, the Eternal Spirit, who lies asleep at the bottom of the waters of chaos reposing on the coils of the world-serpent, Ananta, or the Milky Way. What this symbolism meant in Mahayana Buddhism is explained in the Tantra Tattva when it compares Prajna-paramita, Supreme Wisdom, to a lotus flower. 'In the root she is all-Brahman; in stem she is all-Maya (Illusion); in the flower she is all-world; and in the fruit all-liberation'. Applying this to the pillars carved by the early Buddhist builders, who were carrying on the Indo-Aryan traditions from Vedic times, we can understand the ideas they meant to convey. The vase forming the base of the pillar stood for the cosmic waters, 'the all-Brahman'; the shaft was the stalk of the mystic flower—the unreality upon which the world-life was supported—the bell-shaped capital was the world itself enfolded by the petals of the sky; the fruit was *moksha*, liberation, or Nirvana, which was the goal of existence; the altar upon which the Devas were seated was the Tusita heavens".<sup>176</sup>

Images of Bodhisattvas sitting either cross-legged on a lotus seat or standing on a lotus pedestal are very common in India, Nepal, Burma, Malaysia, China and Japan. Lotuses, two, three or four in number, are carved in front of such images, if the deities are not actually sitting or standing in that flower. Such lotuses are also found delineated on a footstool on which Gautama rests his feet instead of sitting cross-legged.<sup>177</sup>

The device of the lotus flower in Buddhism symbolised not only the divine birth but also the possession of life everlasting.



and the preservation and procreation of life. "Such was it with the Aryan queen of heaven, the Brahmanist goddess Sri, and her derivative, the Buddhist Tara, both of whom have the title, 'Garlanded by Lotuses'.<sup>178</sup>

"In the hand of Maitreya, the next coming Buddha, and other divine Bodhisattvas of Gandhara, the lotus in the hand, however, may have had a metaphysical significance and have noted the preservation of the life of the law and the re-vivifying of the same. It was possibly in this sense as cherishers of the law that we find that a lotus-flower adorns the hands of many of the images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who do not specially possess the attribute of a lotus held in the hand".<sup>179</sup>

The lotus is the special emblem of the Founder of the Order of Lamas, Padmakara, 'the lotus-born'; and Tsongkha-pa, the founder of the Yellow-Hat reformed sect, the Gelung, has one on either side of him. Images of divine symbols, such as the seven treasures, are figured usually upon lotus-flowers. The significance attached to the lotus in these cases is the preservation and rebirth of Law rather than procreation and resurrection of life itself.

Varahamihira says: "The Buddha ought to be represented seated upon a lotus, and looking as if he were the father of mankind, with hands and feet marked by lotuses, with a placid countenance, and very short hair".<sup>180</sup> A Buddhist Mahayana text adds: "The turban on his (Bodhisattva's) head is like a *padma* (lotus) flower; on the top of the turban there is a jewel pitcher".<sup>181</sup>

All *Dhyani* Buddhas (Buddhas in meditation) sit on a lotus seat.<sup>182</sup> Amitabha is the oldest among them.<sup>183</sup> Kanakamuni, Kasyapa, Krakuchchanda, and Sakyamuni (Gautama) are the *Manushi* (mortal) Buddhas who are seated on the lotus.<sup>184</sup> Bodhisattvas, who originated from *Dhyani* Buddhas, have all either lotus as their symbol or as an attribute. Lotus is, thus, the symbol of Amoghadarsin and Avalokitesvara. Mahasthamaprabha's symbol is six lotuses or sword. Chandraprabha has moon on lotus for his symbol. Other Bodhisattvas like Akshayamati, Amitaprabha, Gaganaganja, Gandhabasti, Jaliniprabha, Kshitigarbha, Manjusri, Pratibhankura and Vajragarbha hold lotus(es) in their hand among other objects. Ratnapani holds

the disc of the moon on lotus. Avalokitesvara and Manjusri are the most popular Bodhisattvas.

Different forms of Avalokitesvara (Padmapani) have all lotus as their symbol or attribute. Thus, Khasarpana (lotus), Padmanarttesvara (double lotus in all 18 hands), Sadakshari-Lokesvara (rosary and lotus), Simhanada (sword on lotus), Sukhavati-Lokesvara (lotus) and Vajradharma (lotus) have lotus along with other objects as their symbols. Red lotus is the attribute of Padmanarttesvara and Rakta-Lokesvara. Khasarpana holds a stem of lotus. Vajradharma has a lotus with 16 petals as his attribute. The lotus is the attribute, among other objects, of Halahala, Sadakshari-Lokesvara, Sugatisandarsana and Sukhavati-Lokesvara.<sup>185</sup>

Manjusri's different forms have the lotus either as a symbol or as an attribute. Thus Manjughosha, Manjuvara and Vagisvara (*Utpala*) have the lotus as their symbol. Sthirachakra sits on moon supported by the lotus. Manjukumara and Siddhaikavira have the blue lotus as their attribute among other objects.<sup>186</sup>

Emanations of *Dhyani* Buddhas like Akshobhya, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava and Vairochana have all the lotus either as their symbol or attribute. Thus, the two emanations of Akshobhya—Hayagriva and Yogambara—have the lotus as their attributes.<sup>187</sup> Tarodbhava Kurukulla and Uddiyana Kurukulla, two emanations of Amitabha, hold red lotuses in their right hand. Sukla Kurukulla, another emanation of Amitabha, holds a cup of lotus full of nectar in his left hand.<sup>188</sup> Four of the emanations of Amoghasiddhi, viz., Dhanada-Tara, Khadiravani-Tara, Shadbhuja-Sitara and Vasya-Tara, hold the lotus in their left hand. The colour of the lotus in respect of Khadiravani-Tara and Shadbhuja-Sitara is blue. Blue lotus is also the symbol of Khadiravani-Tara. Sita-Tara, another emanation of Amoghasiddhi, holds in her right hand a lotus (*Utpala*) and a lotus-bud in her left.<sup>189</sup> Lotus is the symbol of Chunda and Usnisavijaya, two emanations of Vairochana. Grahamatrika, another emanation of Vairochana, holds a lotus in his left hand.

There are 12 *Paramitas* (perfections of cardinal virtues) among the Buddhists, and ten of them have the lotus with a book as their symbol. They are: Dhyana-paramita, Kanaka-prajnaparamita, Kshanti-paramita, Pitaprajnaparamita, Prajna-

ramita, Ratnaparamita, Sitaprajnaparamita, Upayaparamita, Vajrakarmaparamita and Viryaparamita. Dhyana-paramita and Kshantiparamita have the lotus as their symbol and their attribute is the white lotus. The blue lotus is the symbol and attribute of Viryaparamita. A manuscript on lotus is the symbol as well as the attribute of Prajnaparamita. Moon on lotus is the symbol of Ratnaparamita. She holds in her left hand the disc of the moon on lotus. While a thunderbolt on lotus is the symbol of Upayaparamita, she holds in her left hand a sword on lotus. A double thunderbolt on lotus is the symbol as well as attribute of Vajrakarmaparamita.<sup>190</sup>

Achala (N-E), Mahabala (N-W), Niladanda (S-W), Padmantaka (W), Prajnantaka (S), Sumbharaja (down). Takki-  
raja (S-E), Ushnisha (up), Vighnantaka (N) and Yamantaka (E) are the Buddhist gods of directions. Lotus is the attribute, among other objects, of these *Dikpalas*. Padmantaka is fond of the red lotus befitting his name.<sup>191</sup> Among the six *Dakinis*, Padma-Dakini alone has the lotus symbol.<sup>192</sup>

The lotus is associated with Aditya, Brihaspati and Chandra among the *Navagrahas* (nine planets) of the Buddhists. Brihaspati sits on a lotus. Sun and moon hold their respective discs on the lotus in their right hand.<sup>193</sup> Brahma, in Buddhism also, holds a lotus in one of his four hands.<sup>194</sup> Jambhala, Buddhist god of wealth, is shown as having one of his legs usually pendent and resting on a lotus flower.<sup>195</sup>

*Buddhist goddesses*: Tara, 12 Vasitas, 12 Bhumis and Pancharaksha Mandalas are some of the important Buddhist goddesses. Sarasvati, Brahmanical goddess of Learning, and Manasa, the aboriginal snake-goddess, have been adopted by the Buddhists.

Tara is the mother of all Buddhas, and companion of Avalokitesvara. She is represented as the *Sakti* of *Dhyani* Buddhas. When Tara appears as the *Sakti* of Amoghasiddhi, she holds a *visva-vajra* over a lotus. Tara is of five colours. A full blown lotus is the symbol of White Tara. *Utpala* (white lotus) is the symbol of Green Tara.<sup>196</sup> Green Tara has different forms. As Khadiravani Tara she holds a night lotus in her left hand. Durgottarini and Dhanada Taras have the lotus as their attributes. Chaturbhuja-Sitatara, Visvamata and Kurukulla are White Taras. An *Utpala* lotus is the attribute of Chaturbhuja-Sitatara.

Visvamata holds a white lotus in her left hand. A rosary along with a bowl of lotus is the attribute of Kurukulla.<sup>197</sup> Prasannatara has a lotus in her right hand. Vajratara and Mahachinartara have a lotus in their left hand.

The *Pancharaksha Mandalas* are five Protectresses. Among them Mahasitavati's symbol is a lotus and she holds one in her right hand. Mahasahasrapramardini, another goddess in this group, holds a lotus in her right hand.<sup>198</sup>

There are twelve *Vasita* (spiritual disciplines) goddesses among the Buddhists. They are: Adhimuktivasita, Ayurvasita, Buddhabodhiprabhavasita, Chittavasita, Dharmavasita, Jnanavasita, Karmavasita, Parishkaravasita, Ruddhivasita, Pranidhanavasita, Tathatavasita, and Uppattivasita. They all hold a lotus in their right hand. Blue lotus is the symbol of Dharmavasita, a sword on lotus that of Jnanavasita, and a bowl of lotus that of Dharmavasita. Sun and moon on lotus is the symbol of Ruddhivasita.<sup>199</sup>

The lotus is the symbol of seven of the 12 Bhumis (spiritual spheres) of the Buddhist pantheon. Their symbols and attributes are the same. Thus, Achala (thunderbolt on lotus), Adhimukticharya (red lotus), Archishmati (blue lotus), Durangama (double thunderbolt in double lotus), Prabhakari (sun on lotus), Sadhumati (sword on lotus) and Vimala (white lotus) hold their symbols (mentioned in brackets) in their left hand.<sup>200</sup>

Sarasvati, the goddess of Learning, has been borrowed by the Vajrayana Buddhists with all her regalia to the utter consternation of their own goddess of Wisdom, Prajnaparamita. She is now regarded as the *Sakti* of Manjusri, the Buddhist God of Transcendental Wisdom, and takes different forms. As Arya-Sarasvati, she has the symbol of Prajnaparamita or lotus and holds in her left hand a stalk of the lotus. Maha-Sarasvati is represented in a boon-giving pose with a lotus and holds one in her hand. Vajra-Sarasvati sits on a white lotus and carries a lotus in her right hand. Vajrasarada, another form of Sarasvati, has the lotus and book as her symbol. She holds a lotus in her right hand.<sup>201</sup>

Janguli and Mahamayuri are the Buddhist snake-goddesses. Janguli, daughter of Sankara, is the remover of poison and is born of a lotus. She is of golden appearance, handsome, lotus-faced and dazzling. She is Manasa in disguise.<sup>202</sup> Bhrikuti ac-

companies *Dhyani* Buddha Amitabha and Avalokitesvara (as Khasarpana), holding a lotus in her right hand. She sits on the orb of the moon over a lotus.<sup>203</sup> Hariti, who is now conceived to be the embodiment of Motherhood in Buddhism, is seated on a double-petalled lotus.<sup>204</sup> Pandara is the *Sakti* of *Dhyani* Buddha Amitabha and her symbol is the blue lotus. Chunda, a Buddhist goddess, hold lotuses in her hands. Another Buddhist goddess, Ashtabhuj Kurukulla, has the attribute of a lotus. A red lotus is the attribute of Mahapratyangira among other objects. Lochana is the *Sakti* of Vairochana *Dhyani* Buddha and she hold lotuses supporting other objects.<sup>205</sup>

C. *JAIN GODS*: Jainism, which is as old as Buddhism, has, however, remained confined to India. It is a living faith in India and has its votaries in different parts of the country. The role played by the lotus in Jaina thought is not different from that found in Hinduism and Buddhism. Neither have the Jains added a new dimension to the symbolism of the lotus, nor have they imparted to it a more deeper philosophical meaning. However, they have not been indifferent to the lotus, for the most wonderful representation of this flower in India is to be found in Dilwara<sup>206</sup> (Mount Abu), at the temple of Vastupala and Tejapala, constructed in 1231 A.D. This temple is dedicated to Neminatha, the 22nd of the *tirthankaras* or Jinas. The dome of this temple stands on eight pillars and is a magnificent piece of work. It has a pendent which is a perfect gem. "Where it droops from the ceiling it appears like a cluster of the half-disclosed lotus, whose cups are so thin, so transparent, and so accurately wrought that it fixes the eyes in admiration".<sup>207</sup> Fergusson says: "It is finished with a delicacy of detail and appropriateness of ornament which is probably unsurpassed by any similar example to be found anywhere else. Those introduced by the Gothic architects in Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster, or at Oxford, are coarse and clumsy in comparison".<sup>208</sup>

*Tirthankaras*: Of the 24 *tirthankaras* of the Jains, 'Padma-prabha, the sixth, has the emblem of *Padma*, the red lotus. He was named so either from the colour of the red lotus or after his mother's craving for sleeping on a bed of red lotuses while he was in her womb.<sup>209</sup> Neminatha has the emblem of a blue lotus. But no image of his with the blue lotus symbol has come to

light.<sup>219</sup> The *tirthankaras* Mahavira, Rishabhanatha and Neminaatha have the Padmasana and there is a religious prescription that their images should be made in that posture.<sup>211</sup>

*Yakshas* : Yakshas are the *Sasanadevatas* or attendant deities on *tirthankaras*. Yakshas who have the lotus as their seats or attributes are: Bhrikuti, Brahma (seat), Garuda, Kinnara, Kubera, Patala, and Varuna. Both Digambara and Svetambara sects of the Jains agree in saying that Yakshas Garuda and Varuna hold a lotus in one of their hands.<sup>212</sup> The Digambaras alone grant a lotus to Bhrikuti and Kubera Yakshas.<sup>213</sup> The Naga (*Dikpala*) is seated on a lotus in Jainism.

*Yakshinis* : Yakshinis are the female attendants of the *tirthankaras*. The Yakshinis (1) Amkusa or Anantamati, (2) Asoka or Manavi, (3) Dharani or Tara, (4) Gandhari or Chandra, (5) Nirvani or Mahamanasi, (6) Santidevi, (7) Vairoti or Aparajita, (8) Vajra-Srimkhala or Kali, and (9) Vidita or Vijaya have lotus-seats according to the Svetambara accounts.<sup>214</sup> Amkusa, Dharani, Nirvani, Vajra-Srimkhala and Vidita are four-handed Yakshinis. Dharani or Tara holds two lotuses in her two of the four hands (*Kamalasana utpaladhara padmakshesutro bhrit*). The Svetambaras adorn Kandarpa (= Pannagadevi or Manasi) with a lotus. They place two lotuses in her two hands, but the Digambaras place only one lotus (*Utpala*) in one of her four hands.<sup>215</sup> The Svetambaras represent the four-handed Nirvani or Mahamanasi as seated on a lotus (*padmina*), holding a lotus in one hand, and a lotus bud in another (*utpalangkusa*). Bala and Mahakali, two other Yakshinis, hold a lotus each, in one of their hands, according to the Svetambaras.<sup>216</sup> Vajra-Srimkhala has the attribute of a lotus in one of her four hands. Manavi sits on a blue lotus (*nilasarojavahana*). Gauri, another Yakshini, holds a lotus as her symbol, according to the Digambaras, but only a water-lily in Svetambara texts. Apratichakra or Jambunada has the attribute of a lotus in the Digambara tradition. Santidevi is *Kamalasana*.

*Minor deities* : Padmavati, who is associated with snakes in Jainism, is worshipped as Manasa in Bengal. This Yakshini holds a *Padma* (lotus) according to Svetambara texts. She is granted a lotus-seat by the Digambaras. If she is represented four-handed, she has two lotuses and a blue lotus (*Padmot-pala*) if she is 24-handed, among other attributes.<sup>217</sup> Prajna-

pati Yakshini holds a lotus (*sakti saroja hasta*). She is possibly another name for Sarasvati, the goddess of learning. Sarasvati, who is called Srutidevi in Jainism, has a lotus as her *vahana*.<sup>218</sup> She takes 16 forms among the Jains. The Digambaras grant a lotus to Rohini and Purushadatta manifestations of Srutidevi.<sup>219</sup> This sect holds that Kali and Gauri are seated on a lotus. Mahakali and Gandhari are seated on the lotus according to the Svetambaras.<sup>220</sup>

Sri or Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, is described in Digambara texts as four-handed, holding a flower and a lotus (*Kamala*). The same goddess in Svetambara texts is represented as riding on an elephant and holding lotuses (*padmahastha*).<sup>221</sup>

Among the *Navagrahas* (nine planets) the Sun is represented by the Jains as holding two lotuses in his hands. The Digambaras grant a lotus to Brihaspati as his attribute.<sup>222</sup>

We have so far analysed the significance of the lotus-symbol from a visual angle as the idols are meant for public worship. The lotus has entered into the individual worship of gods and goddesses, especially in Hinduism. The lotus in Tantric worship is more abstract than its visual symbolism in iconography. Our knowledge of the esoteric significance attached to the lotus in its more abstract form in the Tantras is very limited.

## VI. LOTUS IN TANTRIC WORSHIP

The lotus plays an important part in the occult Tantricism. Tantrics have *Mandalas* and *Chakras* for worshipping their favourite deities collectively and individually and the practice of Yoga for realisation of the Supreme.

*Mandalas*: The Tantrics, all over India, worship their favourite deities by drawing a *Mandala* with various colours. The lotus-motif forms the basis of the *Mandalas*, many of which are repetitions or elaborations upon the basic motif. *Mandala* literally means a 'circle', and is a design-motif used to concentrate the divine power during worship. It also means (1) a seat and/or instructional device used in *diksha*, (2) a device in constructing *mantras*, and (3) a large design used to plot out a tract of land or part thereof to determine the exact location of the deity's placement.<sup>223</sup>

"The *Mandala* is a pictorial representation of the process of the descent or devolution of the One Supreme Consciousness,

step by step, layer by layer, into this creation of multitudinous forms. Equally, it provides the scheme for the evolutionary return of the individual unit so formed, into the plenitude of the Fundamental Consciousness at the head of all Manifestations. This symbol scheme is enlivened by a special occult process of the Tantric ritual and conditions of the archetypal creation are recreated, as it were, by this configuration. This framework is used by the practitioner for the evocation and precipitation of the cosmic process of disintegration and re-integration in his individual mould. Thus the *Mandala* is no decorative imagery for a ritual. It provides a potent material focus for the operation of subtler forces within and without".<sup>224</sup>

Padmamandala, Panchapadmamandala, Navapadmamandala and Chakrabjamandala are the most important *Mandalas* that concern us, all described in certain Pancharatra texts.<sup>225</sup> *Mandalas* have different patterns, for example, Chakrabjamandala has no less than nine variations. We are reluctant to enter into such details here, as it is beyond our scope. Some idea about these *Mandalas*, where the lotus-motif predominates, are necessary here.

Padmamandala ('Lotus-Design *Mandala*'): In the centre of the *mandapa* (on the dais) a lotus-design is made according to some specific measurements for the central carp of the lotus-design. The petals are composed of a double fish-shaped design, surrounded by crescent forms and fully enclosed by a circle. The interspaces of the circle are coloured with metallic powders as directed in the texts.<sup>226</sup>

Panchapadmamandala ('Design of the Five-lotus *Mandala*'): In this *Mandala*-design with five lotus-discs, the central and dominating lotus-motif is thought of as representing Pradyumna and his attendants. Others are invoked into the rest of the four lotus-motifs.<sup>227</sup>

Navapadmamandala ('Design of the nine-lotus pattern *Mandala*'): Since worship of a particular *Mandala* is meditation upon the universe itself, the devotee should take care to establish in the pattern the proper representation of the cosmic power—such as the four *Vyuha*-forms of Aniruddha, Sangharshana, Pradyumna, and Vasudeva. Of the nine Chakrabjamandala designs, the ultimate one is the ninth variant containing a design of nine lotuses. In this pattern, a different cosmic power



(*Sakti*) is put in each lotus—the four *Vyuhās*, Narayana, Brahma, Vishnu, Yajnapurusha and Varahi. Directions are given in the texts for drawing the ultimate of all *Mandalas*, measuring them out and colouring them.<sup>228</sup>

In the Navapadmamandala, containing nine lotuses, the best kind will always have the central lotus-motif—of the nine predominating over the others by its size—since it alone represents Vasudeva, the eight surrounding lotus-motifs containing comparatively lesser powers.<sup>229</sup> Given the single lotus-motif, certain alterations can be made to produce the so-called “sun-design”, which is supposed to contain Brahma.<sup>230</sup> The Navapadmamandala design is to be placed in the *mandapa*-pavilion for the establishment of the pitcher in the nine-lotus design. The worship done through the “Nine-Lotus-Mandala” is efficacious to attain higher knowledge.<sup>231</sup>

Chakrabjamandala (‘Disc-like Lotus-Mandala’): The most celebrated of the lotus-motif *Mandalas* is the Chakrabjamandala. It may be represented in nine different patterns and directions for drawing them with their measurements are found in the texts. Directions also are given in the texts to colour the inter-spaces, followed by instruction of where in the *Mandala*-design various deities are to be invoked to reside. The benefits of worshipping each of these *Chakrabja*-designs are found in the texts.<sup>232</sup>

When certain occasions like raging of epidemics, threat from enemies, famine etc. arise, a special kind of diagram is recommended for worship, with particular liturgies, in the Chakrabjamandala.<sup>233</sup>

Vyuhalakshana gives details for design of larger *Padma Mandalas* with directions for (1) where the lotus-motif is to go, (2) how the motif is to be enclosed in a square (*pitha*), and (3) where openings (*dvara*) may be made along the sides of the square. Deities are to be imagined to be present in various parts of the overall design (*vyuha*).<sup>234</sup>

*Chakras*: The *Chakra* is used for individual worship of a particular deity. The main deity, *Pradhana*, takes its abode in the centre of the *Chakra*, while its emanations gather round it as *Parivara devatas*. Tantrics hold that by worshipping the *Chakra* of a deity, one senses immediately the form-pattern and has, therefore, its concrete realisation. The *Mandala*, on the

other hand, is used in the worship of more than one deity. The *Chakra Puja* is more abstract than image worship. The *Chakra*, like the *Mantra*, leads one to the direct perception of the Divine form. In the *Chakra* are caught the lines of beauty, harmony and symmetry on which the eternal geometrician fashions the universe. *Chakras* are drawn with straight lines, triangles, circles, and squares as their constituents. The lotus-motif is present in all *Chakras*.

The lotus opens its flower with rising of the Sun and closes with its setting. It is a flower that eminently responds to the play of light and it blossoms, opening out petal by petal, signifying gradual unfoldment of the latent powers in the being. That is why the centres of consciousness in the subtle body are picturesquely described as lotuses and this motif plays a significant part in the diagrammatic representation as the *Chakra*. Sahasrara Padma Chakra with its thousand-petals is one of the important *Chakras*. *Chakra Puja* establishes identity between a particular deity and its votary (*Sadhaka*). The first words of the eleven musical compositions of Muthuswami Dikshitar, a celebrated musician of Tamil Nadu of yester-years, begin with the word *Kamalambika* in different *ragas*, *talas*, and *vibhaktis*, as they are a panegyric of the Divine Mother seen through the *Sri Chakra*.<sup>235</sup>

*Yoga*: There are six important *Chakras* or subtle centres of operation in the body of the *Shaktis* or Powers of the various Tattvas or Principles which constitute the bodily Sheaths. These centres are called *Padmas* or Lotuses. These lotuses are abstract conceptions, but we name some of them to give an idea of ancient Indian occult way of thinking. Muladhara, Svadhishtana; Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna are the *Chakras* situated on the spinal chord starting from the genitals and going upwards to the eyebrows. Muladhara is described in Tantric texts as a lotus having 4, Svadhishtana 6, Manipura 10, Anahata 12, Vishuddha 16 and Ajna 2 petals.

The Muladhara Lotus is attached to the mouth of the *Sushumna* (spine) and is placed below the genitals and above the anus. It has four petals of crimson hue. Its head (mouth) hangs downwards.

The Svadhishtana Lotus, placed inside the *Sushumna* at

the root of the genitals, is of a beautiful vermilion colour. It has six petals.

The Manipura Lotus is placed above Svadhishthana, at the root of the navel and it has ten petals of the colour of heavy-laden rain clouds. It has the colour of the blue lotus.

The Anahata Lotus is above Manipura, in the heart. It is a charming Lotus of the shining colour of the Bandhuka (*Pentapetes Phoenixea*) flower, with 12 petals. This Lotus is like the celestial Wishing-tree. The filaments surround and adorn its pericarp.

The Vishuddha Lotus is situated in the throat and is of a smoky purple hue. All its sixteen petals are of a crimson hue. In the pericarp of this Lotus there is the Ethereal Region.

The Lotus named Ajna is like the moon (beautifully white). It has two petals.

Above the Ajna-Lotus is the Manas Chakra, a Lotus of six petals. And above this, again, is the Soma Chakra, a Lotus of sixteen petals. Several other Lotuses are also described in Tantric texts. The last Lotus is the Sahasrara, the varicoloured Lotus of a thousand petals situated at the crown of the head. Here *Sakti*—who is to be thought of as having ascended through all the Lotuses of the *Sushumna*, waking each Lotus to full blossom in passing—is joined to Siva in a union that is simultaneously the fulfilment and dissolution of the worlds of sound, form, and contemplation.<sup>236</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The lotus has kept the Indian mind spell-bound from the days of Harappa. The Vedic conception of the lotus in its physical and metaphysical form has found its full expression in Indian art and architecture. A clear understanding of the development of the Vedic thought is necessary for assessing the role played by the lotus in Indian iconography.

The lotus in Hinduism stands for androgyny, creative force or power, creation, fecundity, fertility, immortality, self-generative cosmic action, self-existence, the Mother Goddess, the generative organ of the female water, and divine origin. As a flower that follows the course of the Sun, it stands for the highest and purest of spiritual conceptions. Its close association with water makes it the symbol of universal life.

The lotus in Buddhism represents supernatural, spontaneous, or miraculous birth on the one hand and possession of life everlasting and presence and procreation of life. The lotus symbolism in Jainism does not differ much from that of Hinduism and Buddhism. The lotus in Indian iconography is associated with gods and goddesses who had their origin in cosmic waters and their manifestations. Gautama Buddha is considered to be the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, the supreme god of Hindus who sleeps on the serpent Ananta in the Milky Ocean. The association of the lotus in the Buddhist pantheon is derived from Hinduism.

The Ionic capital and Mahomedan dome have been evolved from the lotus-pattern. The dome dates in India from the 3rd century B.C.

The temple architecture of India has been influenced considerably by the lotus. Apart from bestowing its name to one or two temple styles, the lotus finds a place in the *Amalaka*, *padma-bandha* and other architectural features. Town-planning in ancient India was also influenced by the lotus. The Tantrics worship the *Chakras* and *Mandalas*, named after the Lotus. The practitioners of the Yoga too have not ignored the Lotus symbol. Thus, the lotus has played, and still plays, an important role in the everyday life of India. Its symbolism is esoteric, but at the same time universal. The ramifications of its symbolism are too subtle to explain. It is in the fitness of things that the lotus has been declared as our National Flower, for it provides the key to the Indian Culture.

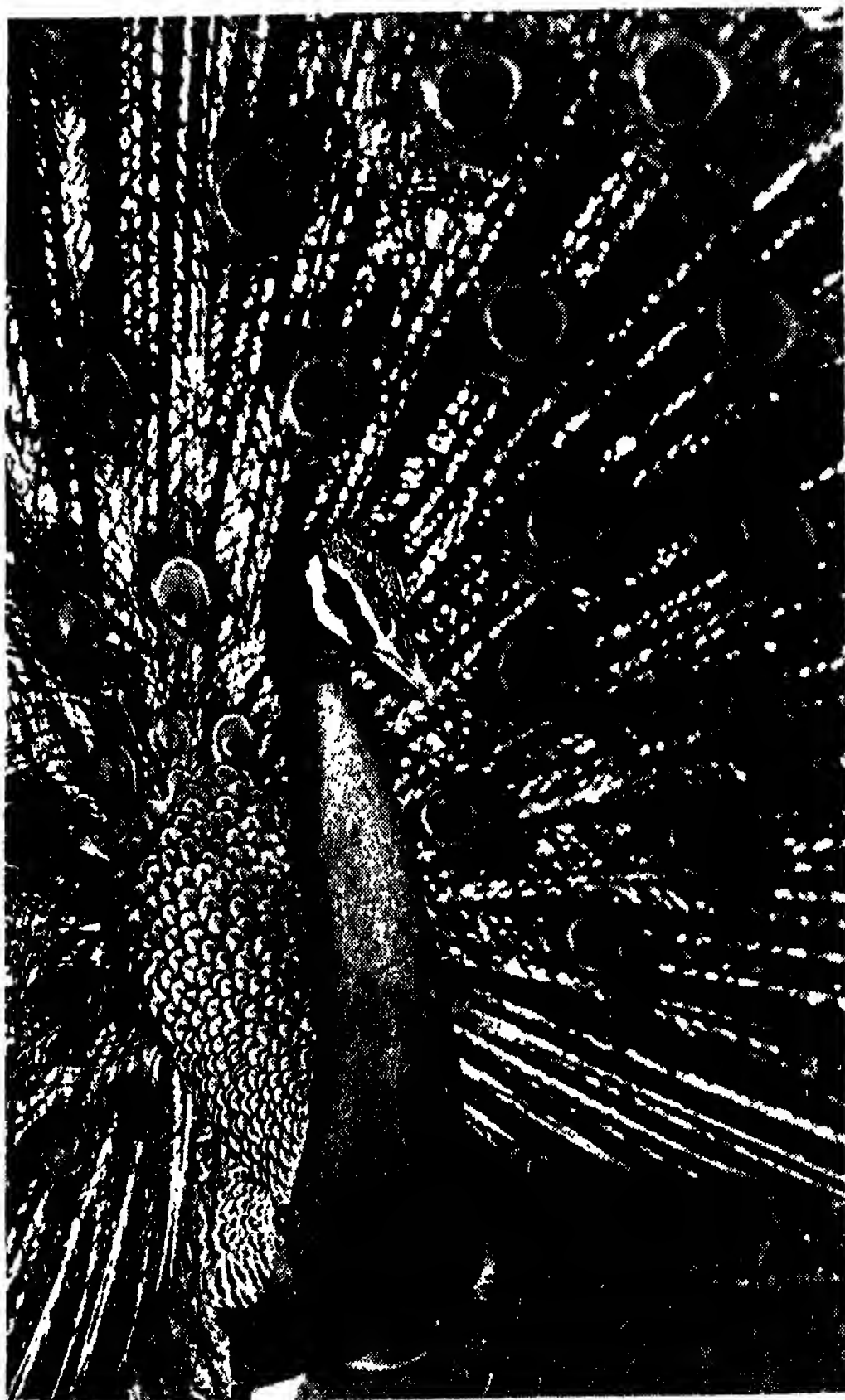
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interested only in the symbolism of the lotus, these articles are not made use of in this Chapter.



**A LOTUS IN BLOOM**  
**(Photo : Radhakanta Paul)**



8.

**THE PEACOCK, READY TO DANCE -  
(Calcutta Zoo, Photo ; Radhakanta Paul)**

# 7

## PEACOCK—OUR NATIONAL BIRD

The Peacock (*Pavo cristatus*) was declared the National Bird of India on January 31, 1963. The decision to designate one of our birds as our National Bird followed the resolution of the Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation, held in Tokyo in May 1960, which had recommended that every nation should declare what special bird enjoyed the honour of being called her national bird. The matter was later taken up by the Indian Board for Wild Life, and the State Governments were also asked to give their views. The final choice of the Peacock as our National Bird was made after due consideration to the views of the State Governments and the opinions expressed in the Press. Some of the other birds that were considered for the honour were the Great Indian Bustard, the Sarus Crane, the Garuda (Brahminy kite) and the swan (*hamsa*). The strongest contender was the Great Indian Bustard. The Peacock is the only bird in India which has enjoyed universal esteem from the pre-historic Harappan times to the present day. The bird is worshipped all over India. How the Peacock, the best specimen of Indian culture, and an original inhabitant of South India came to be worshipped by followers of the major religious systems of Asia and Europe is an interesting chapter in the history of metamorphosis of gods. The Peacock is the only bird which has enjoyed a certain amount of protection almost everywhere in India from the dawn of Indian History. There were bickerings among naturalists about the appropriateness of selecting

\* See this author's (1) 'Peacock—National Bird of India', *Folklore* (Calcutta), vol. XIV, No. 11, November 1973, pp. 405-418; (2) 'The Peacock Cult in Asia', *Asian Folklore Studies* (Asian Folklore Insutitute, Nagoya, Japan), vol. XXII (2), 1974, pp. 93-170 and (3) *The Peacock, The National Bird of India* (Firma KLM Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1977), pp. xv+340, illustrated. This Chapter is culled out from these studies and as such references and notes are not given.



the Peacock as our National Bird, but they had to bow before the public of India.

The peacock, which has been chosen as our National Bird, certainly deserved that honour. Perhaps no other bird is a symbol of so many qualities—grace, pride, friendliness, caution, a certain non-conformism, community spirit and—if the fair sex will not take exception—benevolent male dominance.

The peacock is a native of Southern India, and is found all over Tamil Nadu. The bird is distributed throughout India and Sri Lanka, except in a few localities such as parts of Lower Bengal, that appear to be too damp or otherwise unsuitable. The peafowl abounds in the base of the Himalayas, whole of Assam Valley, Assam Hills, North and North-Western India, Central India and Western parts of India. Peacocks have fled from our metropolitan cities as they are afraid of their civilised brethren. If, perchance, they visit our concrete jungles, they take shelter in zoological gardens or lakes.

There are two species of peacocks besides the *Pavo cristatus*. The green one, *Pavo muticus*, is widely distributed in Burma and Malaysia. It is a mutant species of the *Pavo cristatus*. The white peacock, of which there is one in the Zoological Gardens of Calcutta, is a different species, though ornithologists are apt to call it an albino. The discovery of the solitary African species, the Congo Peacock (*Afropavo Congensis*) in 1936 was hailed as the greatest bird news of the 20th century.

The peacocks are often met with in cultivation, especially where, as is the case in many parts of North-Western and Western India, they are protected by particular castes of Hindus. The peacock frequents the fields in the immediate vicinity of human habitation and even roosts on village trees in the Indus and Gangetic valleys. In Northern India flocks of peacocks can be seen on the outskirts of villages. All night they roost on trees and during the day make delightful forays into cultivated fields.

In the wild state, the peafowl inhabits dense scrub and deciduous jungle abounding in rivers and streams. It is an omnivorous bird. Vegetable shoots, grains, berries, gram, grass-blades, buds, shoots of grass, leaves of certain plants, insects like termites and grasshoppers, frogs, small reptiles like lizards, snakes etc. are eaten with relish.

*Colour of the Peacock* : "Crown of head covered with short curly feathers, metallic blue changing into the green; feathers on lores, supercilia, chin, and throat, similar, but less curly and dull green; crest of long almost naked shafts terminated by fan-shaped tips that are black at the base, bluish green at the ends: neck all round rich blue; back covered with scale-like bronze-green feathers with black borders, coppery inner areas, and green shaft-stripes, these pass on the rump into the bronze-green of the train, changing in the middle in certain lights into coppery bronze, each feather, except the outer-most at each side and the longest plumes, ending in an 'eye' or ocellus, consisting of a purplish-black heart-shaped nucleus surrounded by blue within a coppery disk, with an outer rim of alternating green and bronze; scapulars and outer surface of wing, including tertiaries, mostly barred black and buff, a few of the outer median secondary covers black glossed with green and purple; primaries and their coverts pale chestnut, secondaries black; tail dark brown; breast and flanks dark glossy green; thighs buff; abdomen and downy lower tail-coverts blackish brown".

*Peahens* have the head and nape rufous brown, tips of the crest-feathers chestnut edged with green; lower neck metallic green; the upper surface brown, faintly mottled paler in parts, quills and tail-feathers dark brown, the latter with whitish tips; breast and abdomen buffy white, inner portion of each breast-feather dark brown glossed with green; vent and downy under tail-covers dark brown.

The peafowls are possessed of phenomenally keen sight and hearing and are excessively wary and will slink away through the undergrowth on the least suspicion. The bird, despite its rather cumbersome uniqueness, can vanish behind foliage at the approach of a suspect. The birds are found in abundance where they are considered sacred and are inordinately shy in places where they are hard hunted. Suspicion and cunning are written on every look, or every movement of the peafowl in districts where they are hunted and it is remarkable, if any are in a patch of jungle that is being beaten, how successful these birds usually are at evading the guns. The peacock is a very intelligent bird. A great walker, the peafowl wanders over a large area in the course of a day. The cocks carry their long trains, which are surprisingly light, well above the ground level

with their body. The peafowl use its wings for flying upto, and down from, the nightly roost, and for escaping from sudden attack; and flies readily when it is faced with an obstruction, such as a river. In flight, the tail is widely spread, fan-wise, with the train (comprising the rump-feathers and upper tail coverts) compressed into a narrow bundle. The flight is slow and heavy at first, but once it gathers momentum the birds are good speedmasters. Generally the birds seldom leave the ground and only the approach of an enemy or obstruction can induce them to rise with laborious noisy flapping.

The peacock, incongruously enough, has a disagreeably shrill cry and ugly feet. Its call-note is the familiar loud, trumpet-like *pehawn, pehawn*; this is produced by both sexes, but especially by the male, who utters it most frequently during the breeding season, and even at night if he become suspicious. The bird's trumpet-like cry resembles the meow of a gigantic cat. In North India villagers say that the cry forms the syllables "min-hao" (come rain). The cock is an uncanny weather forecaster and seldom has it to apologise for being wrong.

The peahen produces only a single striking brood annually. The breeding season is generally from the end of June to September. The hen generally lay 4 to 8 eggs in a single clutch. These eggs are strong and glossy, closely pitted, whitish to reddish buff in colour and they measure about 2.74 by 2.05 inches. The nest of the peahen is a hollow scratched in the ground, lined with a few twigs or leaves or a little grass.

The peacock is not without some controversial weakness of character. The bird is incorrigibly polygamous, but in a very methodical manner. Each cock has a 'harem' of two to five hens. The cock is prepared to keep the hen in good humour by displaying its glorious feathery train and at the climax of the display, the tail feathers are vibrated, giving them a shining appearance and imparting a rustling sound. The train of the peacock is erected vertically above the bird's neck, being supported by the tail feathers in courtship. The female is said to have an irresistible fascination for the plumage of the male tail. The courtship antics of the peafowl are interesting.

## MAYIL AND MAYURA

The word for Peacock in Dravidian languages is either the *Mayil* or its derivatives. The Sanskrit word for the Peacock is *Mayura*, which is an equivalent of the Dravidian *Mayil* as *ra* and *la* have no difference in reality (*ralayorabheda*). The Dravidian family of languages comprise the better known Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telegu and the lesser known dialects such as Toda, Kota, Kodagu, Parji, Tulu, Kolami, Naiki, Ollari, Gondi, Konda, Kui, Kurukh and Kuwi. The word for Peacock in Tamil and Malayalam is *Mayil*, *Mayli* in Kodagu, *Mil* in Kota, *Mis* in Toda, *Mairu* in Tulu, *Manjil* in Parji, *Mangil* in Gadaba or Ollari, *Mal* in Gondi, *Miril* in Konda, *Medu/Melu* in Kui and *Mellu* in Kuwi.

The word in Sanskrit for Peacock is *Mayura*, which, as we have already seen, is the Aryanised form of the Dravidian *Mayil*. *Bhujangabhuk*, *Bhujangabogin*, *Nilakantha*, *Sikhavala*, *Sikhin*, *Barhin*, *Barhina*, *Chitrapicchaka*, *Kalapin*, *Sikhandin*, *Pracalakin*, *Chandrakin*, *Chitramekhala*, *Sitapanga*, *Kekin*, *Meghanadanulasin*, *Dhwajin* etc. are some more words in Sanskrit to describe the *Mayura*. Ancient Indian ornithologists have divided the Peacock into six species, viz., (1) *Mayura*, (2) *Barhin*, (3) *Nilakantha*, (4) *Bhujangabhuk*, (5) *Sikhavala* and (6) *Kekin*. Each of these species has its own characteristics.

## ORIGIN OF THE FIRST PEACOCK

Ornithologists simply say that the peacock is the most beautiful pheasant. Of course, it is the most beautiful bird and is in the natural course of evolution. The tribal people of India, who are full of vigour and imagination, have many a fascinating story to account for its origin and let us see what the Binjhar tribesmen of Dhaurabhata, Raipur district, have to say:

“A village carpenter called Musraha was making a plough. As he was working, a blue jay flew by and cried *kach-kach*. The carpenter was annoyed and threw some shavings at it. *Dekho-dekho*, he cried. When the shavings touched it, the jay turned into a peacock and flew into the air trying to say *Dekho*, but all it could manage to say was *Tego-tegho*. Presently it returned and sat by the carpenter.

"Musraha said, 'You were made by my hands, and you belong to me. So your name is *Mor* (mine, or the peacock). Your beauty will be wonderful, and all men will love you'".

The tribal people of India have fascinating stories to account for why the peahens are dull creatures as compared to their lordly males, when the female of the species are the most beautiful among all creatures. The eye-designs or ocelli are what attract the peahens as well as human beings to the Peacock. How did the peafowl get its hundred-eyes is difficult to explain scientifically as our knowledge of colour perception is still imperfect. The ocelli have fired the imagination of the ancient poets and tribal people of India alike, besides European nations.

The Ramayana of Valmiki relates the following interesting story to account for the origin of the peacock's variegated feathers. A king, Marutta by name, was once performing a sacrifice, where all gods arrived in order to partake of their shares. Brahmarshi Samvartta, brother of Brihaspati, was the chief priest. Ravana, the great demon-monarch of Lanka, who moved about in his aerial car Pushpaka, appeared on the scene all of a sudden. All gods were aware that he had become unconquerable by virtue of certain boons. Being afraid of violation at his hands as they always were, the gods entered the animal-world in order to save themselves from the haughty and naughty Ravana. Accordingly, Indra became a peacock, Yama a crow, Kubera a lizard, Varuna a swan, and so on. When Ravana disappeared from the scene, the gods resumed their original forms, and rejoicing at the passing away of the calamity, each of them offered certain boons to the creature whose form he had assumed at the critical juncture. In this way, Indra bestowed upon the peacock, who then possessed blue feathers only, his thousand eyes to be kept on his feathers, which thereafter became lustrously variegated. He also endowed the bird with the boon that it might thenceforth not entertain any fear from serpents, and rejoice at the advent of rains.

The Khasis of Meghalaya have a very interesting story to explain the reason for the peacock possessing the beautiful feathers. Ka Sngi (= Sun), the beautiful maiden who ruled over the Blue Realms, was feeling lonely after the creation of the world when all animals spoke the language of the mankind. U Klew, the peacock, was then but an ordinary grey feathered bird without

any pretensions to beauty. One day the birds held a great conference and sent U Klew as their ambassador to Ka Sngi. She accorded him the most hearty welcome, gave him unstinted attention. The cock received all these affections with cold indifference thinking that all this was due to his own personal greatness rather than to the gracious and unselfish devotion of his hostess. As Ka Sngi was so devoted in attending to U Klew, she forgot to shed her light on the earth as a result of which rains and darkness enveloped the world. Even then, U Klew deserted Ka Sngi. She could not tolerate this and followed him weeping: as she wept, her tears fell on his feathers, transforming them into all colours of the rainbow. Some large drops falling on his long tail, as he flew away, were turned into brilliant hued spots which are called *Ummat Ka Sngi* (Sun's tears) by the Khasis even to this day. Ka Sngi told him that they were given for a sign that wherever he might be and on whomsoever his affections might be bestowed, he would never be able to forget her, Ka Sngi, the most beautiful and most devoted of his beloveds.

#### THE PEACOCK FLESH—A TABLE DELICACY

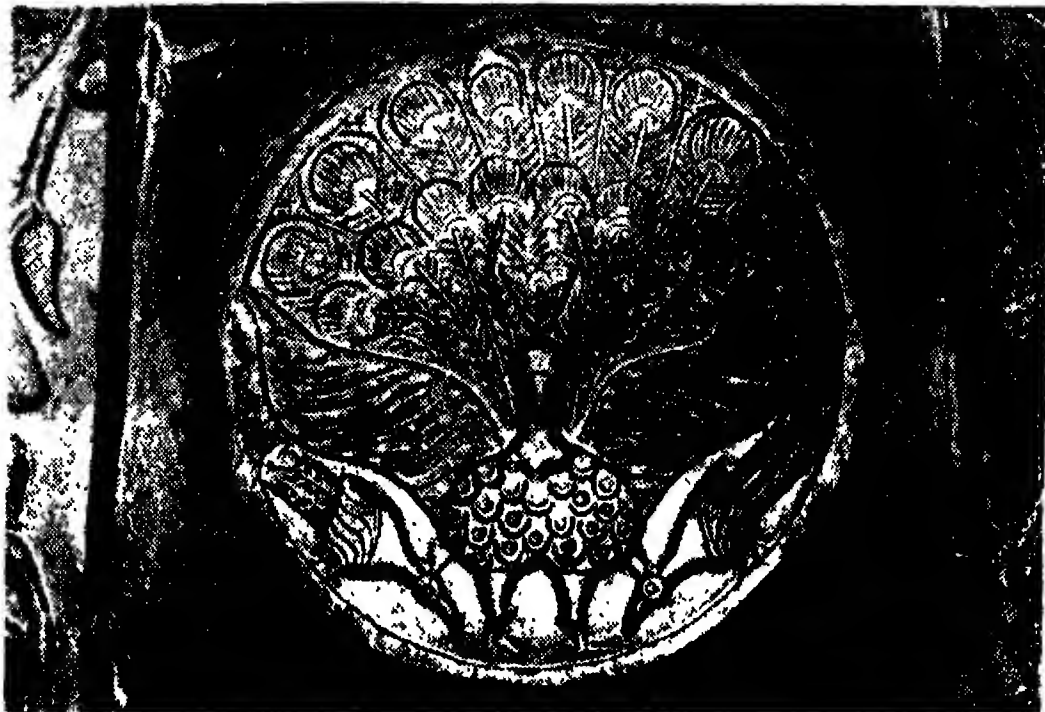
The Shah of Iran gave a banquet on October 14, 1971 at Persepolis to the heads of the States of the world who had assembled to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the 'Peacock Throne'. The menu of the banquet consisted of quails' eggs stuffed with caviar, mouse of crayfish tails etc., besides 50 *stuffed peacocks*, feathers and all. President V. V. Giri, who attended the banquet from India, could not taste the peacock as it was our National Bird. •The peacock flesh was a table delicacy all over the world. Emperor Charlemagne is believed to have served thousands of peacocks at a single state banquet. The English barons of the Middle Ages gave proof of their wealth by serving a roasted peacock at their formal banquets. More than 2000 years ago Alexander the Great gave a feast to assuage the feelings of King Porus whom he had defeated in a bloody battle in North-West India. The historian records that a 'hundred well-cooked peacocks' made the diplomatic dinner a memorable event. A peacock's bone was a prize among lovers and Vatsyayana has recommended in his Kamasutra that if the bone of a peacock be covered with gold and tied on the

right hand it made a man lovely in the eyes of beholders ! There was no prohibition against eating the flesh of the peacock in our Dharma Sastras. The medicinal value of the peacock flesh was very great and that is why it was considered a table delicacy all over the world.

The *Charaka Samhita* says: "The flesh of the peacock is exceedingly beautiful for the eye, the ear, intelligence, the digestive fire, the consequence of age, complexion, voice, and period of life. It is besides, strength-giving and wind destroying. It increases also the semen". Susruta in his *Samhita* said: "The flesh of the Mayura is astringent, and saline in taste, and is beneficial to the skin, helps the growth of hair, improves the voice, intellect, appetite, and relish for food, and imparts strength and vigour to the organs of sight and hearing". He prescribed that a king should "drink regularly every day such wholesome cordials as honey, clarified butter, curd, milk and cold water and use in his food the meat and soup of the flesh of a peacock, mon-goose, *Godha* (a species of lizard), or *Prishata* deer". *Mayuraghrita* and *Maha-mayuraghrita* were two special medicinal preparations in our Ayurvedic system.

Puranic and epic evidence show that the peacock's flesh continued to be a delicacy and there was nothing strange in finding the peacock on the table of Asoka the Great. Credit should go to him for restricting its slaughter and its gradual abolition after his conversion to Buddhism.

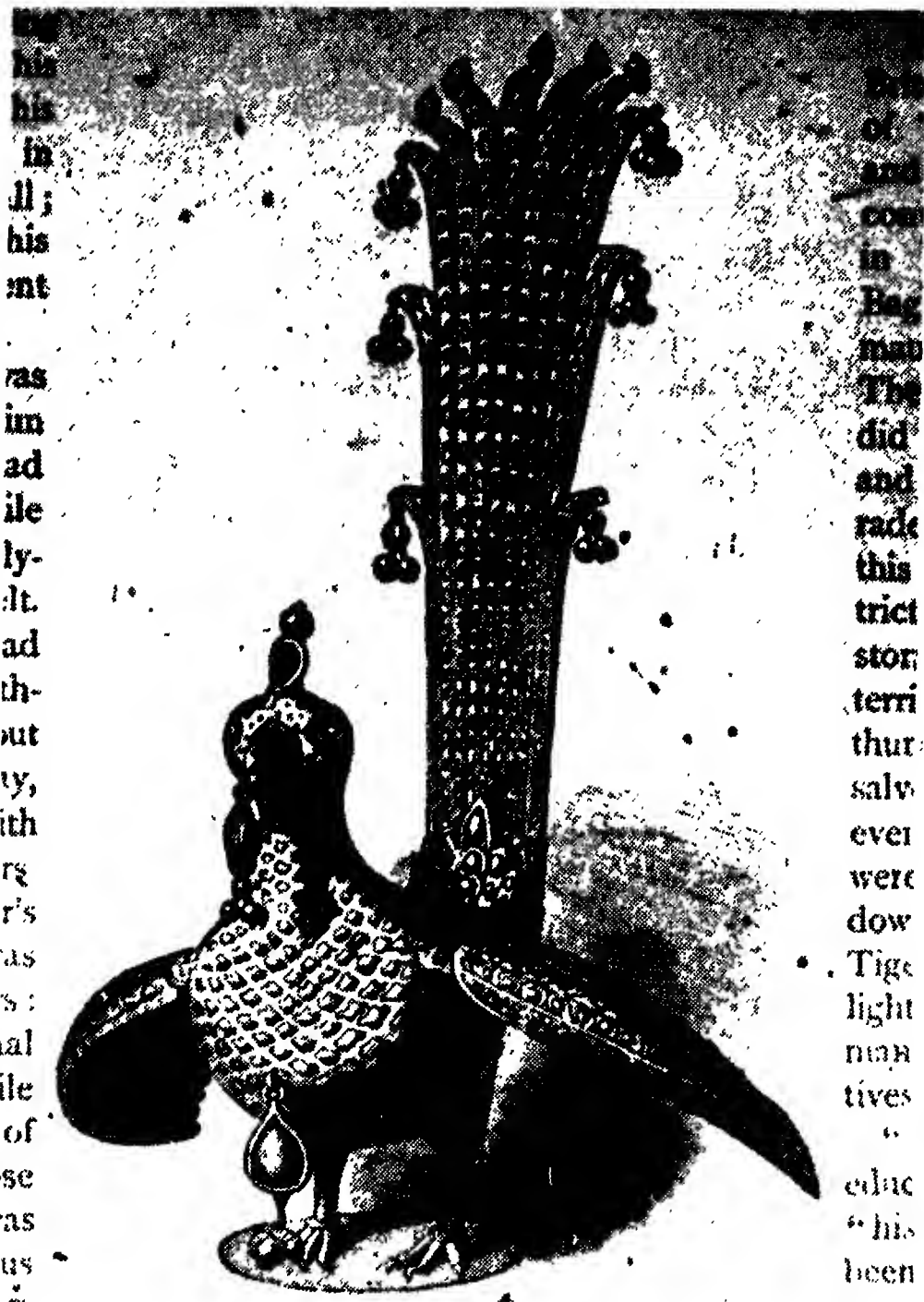
Asoka's Rock Edict I says: "Formerly in the kitchen of His Sacred Gracious Majesty, daily many hundred thousands of living creatures were slaughtered for the purpose of curries. But now when this religious edict is being inscribed, only three creatures are slaughtered, two peacocks and one deer, that too, not regularly. *Even these three living creatures afterwards shall not be slaughtered*" (Italics added). It is evident from this Rock Edict that Asoka was planning to dispense with peacocks. The peacock's flesh ceased to be a table delicacy by the time the Minor Rock Edict IV was inscribed. The Guptas extended protection to the peacock. The Mauryas had their totem as *Mor*, the peacock, and the totemistic animal/bird is sacred and inviolable. There is no difficulty in asserting that the peacock's flesh ceased to be a table delicacy with the advent of the Mauryas. However, its medicinal use continued for a long time.



9.

THE PEACOCK FROM BHARHUT  
circa B. C. 2nd Century  
(Indian Museum, Photo : Radhakanta Paul)





TIPPOO'S HUMMA, OR PEACOCK

10.

**TIPPOO SULTAN'S HUMMA, OR PEACOCK**  
 (Cassell's *Illustrated History of India*, vol. I, p. 342)

Kautilya prescribed the punishment of first amercement for those who molested the peacock and other auspicious birds. He says: "Elephants, horses...peacock, parrot...and other auspicious animals whether birds or beasts, shall be protected from all kinds of molestation..." State protection had been granted to deer, lion, peacock and certain other species of wild life in the Gupta Empire. The treatises on Dharmasastra have laid down a *prayaschitta* or expiation for killing a peacock, which is the same as enjoined for killing a Sudra. They also enjoin that the killer of a peacock shall offer a cow to a Brahman. The declaration of the Peacock as our National Bird has made its killing a punishable offence. In fact, a 10-year old boy of Jhansi was fined Rs. 500 for killing a peacock.

### AN AUSPICIOUS BIRD

The Peacock is considered auspicious all over India. There are copious references to the bird in standard astrological treatises. It is regarded as an auspicious bird. The mere sight of the bird is believed to bring good luck and to bestow peace of mind. It is represented on different occasions, as a good omen, when seen in front, to the right, and even to the left. It is also stated to be strong in the East.

It is considered an auspicious sign, if one comes across the peacock while going out on any important business. Hindus believe that a Brahman, a cow, ...a peacock with its plumage expanded, girls singing songs, etc. are good omens if one comes across them. The Binjwar tribesmen of Bihar considered the crowing of a peacock a bad omen.

Ancient Indian authors go even so far as to state that a halo (*parivesha*) of sun or moon shining like a peacock in the spring, glossy in an unbroken circle, is conducive to welfare and plenty (*siva-subhikshara*). Varahamihira in his *Brihat Samhita* has stated: "If one happens to meet with a good omen in the direct South, the purpose of one's journey would be fulfilled and one would obtain peacocks, buffaloes and cocks, if it is observed in the second division from the South, one would come in contact with bards, dancers and the like and enjoy happiness and satisfaction". The comparison of the gait of kings to that of the peacock found in Varahamihira's works certainly points to the bird's dignified way of walking, to be imitated even by kings.

The peacock's connection with rain is explained in this way. Lord Skanda-Kartikēya, who is called Muruga, Shanmukha etc. in South India, is considered to be the guardian deity of seasonal rains. The peacock is his vehicle and its dance is considered to be a divine symptom of God's grace and His blessings for immediate rain. Peacock-coloured evening clouds are said to prognosticate immediate rain. It is believed that a peacock's harsh clamour foretells rain. This belief is not only confined to India, but also to the world over.

### PEACOCK IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

There are references to the Peacock in the Vedas, the most ancient literary compositions of the world. The steeds of Indra, the war-god of the Aryans, are described as possessing hair that looked like the peacock's feathers and as having tails similar to those of the bird in the Rig Veda. The Atharva Veda specifically mentions that the peahen cuts snakes to pieces. The description of Skanda found in the Skanda Yaga, which is included in the *Parisishtas* of the Atharva Veda, is interesting. Here the god is associated with the peacock as his vehicle (*yam vahanti mayurāḥ*). The Sukla Yajur Veda speaks of the peacocks being offered to the Asvins, the twin-gods, at the *Asvamedha* sacrifice. The Aitareya Aranyaka and Sankhayana Aranyaka have offered a flowery tribute to the excellent hue of the peacock's neck. In the Asvamedhaprakarana of the Taittiriya Samhita, there is mention of the peacock along with other fauna dwelling in the forest (*Sauri balakarsyo mayurāḥ syenaste gandharvanam*).

The peacock has fired the imagination of Sanskrit poets from the *Adi Kavi* (first bard) Valmiki down to Udaya; Kalidasa, the national poet of ancient India, was its votary. The sage, Valmiki has never missed an opportunity to describe the peacock. He includes *Mayurakas*, peacock-catchers, among the followers of Bharata when he went in search of Sri Rama in exile. Sri Rama feels the agony of his separation from Sita (who danced like a peacock when he had strung the bow for getting her in marriage), when he sees the peacock with its splendid plumage and tail, moving with its entourage and indulging in its dance. He tells his brother Lakshmana: "Oh Lakshmana, even in

animal nature, there is affection. The peahen abides with its mate (leads a family life)". In the Uttarakhanda of the Ramayana, Sri Rama beholds the peacock in company with his mate singing after a dance with the fan-tail outspread, perched on the Kadamba tree, with the pang of separation from Sita greatly enhanced at the sight. Valmiki's frequent references to the peacock are natural, for the sage lived in his forest hermitage while composing his Ramayana.

Kalidasa, the classical poet, was a city-bred man and he has, therefore, referred to domesticated peacocks going over house-tops in his *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*. There are numerous references to the peacock in his *Ritu-Samhara*, *Meghaduta*, *Raghuvamsa* and other poetical works. Kalidasa's picture of the peacock in his *Raghuvamsa* is unforgettable. "The peacocks which have their habitat near the banks of the river, having their tails erect and expanded would gather strength (would become intense or powerful) to the hearers being full of affections, while the sound of the waves in the waters follow the musical notes (in harmony) like the sound of the tambourine". Who can forget the golden perch of the peacock in Yaksha's house (*Meghaduta*)? Yaksha gives directions to the cloud messenger regarding the spot where his abode is located in the city of Alaka (where domesticated peacocks with ever-glittering plumage lift up their necks for the purpose of crying) thus: "In between the Asoka and Bakula trees in a golden perch having a crystal stand and built at the bottom with jewels (emeralds) as shining as young bamboos, on which at the close of the day, sits thy blue-necked friend the peacock made to dance by my wife with the clappings of the hands rendered charming by her jingling bracelets".

Bhavabhuti, Bharavi and other poets have also drawn pen portraits of the peacock. The poet Sarangadhara addresses this bird thus: "Oh, peacock, your note is pleasing to the poets. Your feathers look like the locks of women decorated with flowers. Like the neck of Isvara, yours is also dark and pleasing to the eye. You have established friendship with the king of clouds. I cannot locate or attribute (the cause) by what particular merit you attained this unique position as your reward".

The peacock has carved out its niche in Indian aesthetics and

fine arts. The music, the dance, painting, applied arts etc. of India have association with our National Bird. Symbolising thirst for love and dancing at the roaring clouds, the peacock forms an important accessory in the Malhara Raga. The Raga Vasanta is not complete without the plumage of the peacock decorating the crown of the hero who is conventionally represented as Krishna.

Dandin, who is one of the authorities on Indian Aesthetics, observes: "During the rainy season, the peacocks make a ring of their feathers by spreading them wide and with their sweet notes indulge in the dance". The peacock dance is a lively item in the Kathak style. The community peacock dance of our tribal folk is more lively.

The peacock, according to the Indian erotic science, is the symbol of the absent lover.

The peacock is not the motif in any school of Indian painting, but the bird's presence is felt desirable by artists when love, rain, separation and other scenes are drawn. If landscape is given in the background, the artist invariably tries to give a portrait of the peacock to make the scene perfect.

The Indian months such as Magha, Sravana, Bhadon etc. are associated with the peacock. In the applied arts of India such as ivory, glass, metals etc. the peacock has supplied the decorative motif to a great extent. The adoption of the Peacock's name for Yogic *asanas* is a testimony to the popularity of the bird from our dim past. Mayurasana or the peacock posture is believed to impart superb mental equipoise and capacity to annul the ill-effects of many poisonous foodstuffs. The Science of Indian Dramaturgy describes a dancing pose called *Mayuralalitam*. *Mayuri*, as the first of the three *Marjanas*, was well-known even in the days of the Father of that Science, i.e., Bharata. Even Sanskrit metres are named after the Peacock; for example, we have *Matta-Mayura*, *Mayura-sarani* etc.

## PEACOCK IN SCULPTURE

The Hindu temple architecture is resplendent with the Peacock motif. Among the 16 *Vyalas* to be painted or carved in palaces and temples, a *Mayura-Vyala* or one with a peacock face is mentioned. Similarly, *Mayura* is given as one of the three types of

*Kinnaras* to be carved or painted. Not only that, but even a *prasada* of the *Sridharadi* type is named *Sikhisekhara* which is briefly described as a mansion possessing four halls with openings on all the four sides, the sanctuary being in water and the top being decked with the figure of a peacock.

The Peacock is the vehicle of many a god and goddess of the Hindu and Buddhist pantheon. The thirty-two forms of Sakti corresponding with the thirty-two forms of Aghora Murti (= Siva) have for their vehicle the peacock. In the Saiva and Kiranagamas, the form of Ananda Tandava Murti is depicted as wearing the peacock's tuft of hair (*Barhi pincha*). Kankala Murti (= Siva) holds the plumes of the bird in his hand. Gana-pati is described in the Ganesa Purana as riding on the peacock and is therefore termed Mayuresa.

The most familiar god who commands the highest respect in South India is Skanda-Kartikeya, who is Muruga and Shanmukha to the Tamilians. This god is seldom portrayed without his favourite vehicle, the peacock. There are seventeen forms of Shanmukha and most of them have the peacock as their mount. His *Shakti* or consort Kumari has the peacock as her mount. Saraswati, the goddess of Wisdom and Learning, has her vehicle in the peacock in Western India, though elsewhere she is riding on the swan.

Amitabha, one of the *Dhyani* (meditating) Buddhas, has the peacock as his vehicle. Mahamayuri, the Buddhist goddess popular in India, Nepal, Tibet, China and Japan, has a golden peacock feather in one of her hands.

The Jains are attached to the peacock as some of their gods and goddesses are having this bird as their vehicle. Trimukha, attendant of the third *Tirthankara* Sambhavanatha, and Isvara, attendant of the fourth *Tirthankara* Abhinandanatha, use the peacock as their vehicle. Prajnapti, one of the Yakshinis of Jains, rides on a peacock. She is possibly another name of the Brahmanical goddess of Wisdom, Saraswati. Apratichakra or Jambunada also rides on the peacock according to the Digambara Sect of the Jains. The Svetambaras of Jains represent their Yakshini Bala (or Achuta or Vijaya) as riding on the peacock. They do not bestow the vehicle of the peacock on Nirani or Mahamanasi, but their Digambara brethren do so. Chaturmukha or Sanmukha and Khendra or Yakshendra are

Yakshas of the Jains. These attendants of *Tirthankaras* ride on the peacock.

### PEACOCK WORSHIP

The peacock first appears in Indian civilisation on the burial potteries of Harappa. Marshall and Mackay have described models of peacocks on Indus Valley potteries. The Indus Valley pottery is the first evidence of peacock worship or pavolatri in the world.

The peacock represented the Earth Goddess in the Dravidian folklore and the cult of this bird was contributed by the Dravidians to the world over. The Aryanisation of the peacock is a later development as is evident from the universal worship of this bird among the Dravidian-speaking peoples whose stronghold is South India. The tribes living in different parts of India speaking the Dravidian tongue are the staunchest votaries of this bird. The Austrics, especially the Khasis, too are addicted to pavolatri.

The Jats who live in the Harappan sites of Indus Valley are the votaries of the peacock. The Mori-clan of the Bhils of Central India worship the peacock as their totem and make periodical offerings of grain. The Khonds worship the bird as a symbol of Mother Earth and their notorious Meriah sacrifice was performed in honour of the peacock. The peacock is worshipped on the occasion of the Pongal festival by the Dravidians all over India.

The worship of the peacock is nowhere else more pronounced than in Tamil Nadu where the deified peacock becomes Lord Muruga (= Muruga, Shanmukha, Skanda-Kartikeya), who has this bird as his vehicle. The peacock represents the Vedas; and it is considered to be the Pranava (the syllable *Om*), the essence of the Vedas. The Vedas being the *Sabda* or sound form of the universe, the peacock symbolises the universe or the evolutionary trend of Maya. This is the esoteric significance imparted to Lord Muruga's mount, the peacock. The Advaita Philosopher, Sri Sankaracharya, has said that the peacock symbolised the origin of form through its variegated colours.

The Buddhists all over the world entertain veneration for the peacock on account of the Jataka story of the Golden Peacock.

There the Bodhisattva is said to have been born as a Golden Peacock living on a plateau of a golden hill in Dandaka. Another Jataka called the Nacca Jataka tells us that from amongst all kinds of birds the peacock, with his neck of jewelled sheen and tail of varied hue, was chosen as the husband for the beautiful princess of the Golden Swan by the king of birds, but that he was not offered the bride on the ground that he, overjoyed, exposed himself while dancing with his plumage spread out.

The peacock is the vehicle of Saraswati in South-East Asian countries. Her cult to these countries must have spread from India very early. There is a statue of the goddess in the ancient city of Bangpu, Thailand. A photograph of Mrs. Saraswati Giri, wife of the then President of India, Dr. V. V. Giri, admiring the statue during her visit to Thailand in 1972, was published in newspapers on 1.4.1972. The goddess is mounted on her vehicle, the peacock.

The peacock worship is deep-rooted in Sri Lanka.

Worship of the peacock is now deep-seated in Hinduism. Hindus hold the bird with reverence and would never think of doing it any harm. Brindavan, the birth-place of Lord Krishna, whose symbol is an ocellus, contains about 1,000 temples and the peacocks and monkeys with which the neighbourhood abounds even today, enjoy special endowments. The peacock worship has Vedic, Puranic and Sastraic sanction and it is no wonder that the bird enjoys inviolability all over India except in certain isolated pockets. The deification of the peacock in the form of god Muruga is the greatest contribution of the Dravidians to Indian Culture.

The peacock worship is the contribution of India to the human race all over the world, though pavolatry is more pronounced in the Orient. From India, the peacock migrated to Persia, thence to Egypt, Greece, and Europe in one direction, and to China and Japan in the other. In Persia it was highly prized from time immemorial and was ever the exclusive possession of the royalty.

Whether the peacock was brought to Greece from India, or Persia, or like the alphabet, was an inheritance from the Phoenicians, is still an open question. At an early period the ancient inhabitants of Greece associated this bird with the representation of the sun: hence it appears as the Greek god, Phaon, "the



Shiner", the progenitor of the fabled phoenix of a later date. This bird became the attribute of the healing god Pæan whose ancient half-forgotten name the worshippers of Apollo called when they cried "Io Pæan". The first appearance of the peacock on the Greek soil, according to historical records, was on the island of Samos. There the bird became attached to the Heraeum as the attribute of Hera, the goddess of heaven, becoming the star-bird, the symbol of the starry firmament on account of the eyes in its tail feathers, which were regarded as the very stars themselves. Perhaps the Hellenic world is indebted to the Yezidis, who inhabit Armenia, Khurdistan and the Caucasus mountains, the staunchest votaries of the peacock.

The high god of the Yezidis is the *Malik-i-Taus* (King Peacock). Writers on Persia have testified to the existence of this peacock cult from time immemorial. The *Malik-i-Taus* is brought out on ceremonial occasions. According to Sir George Birdwood, the *Malik-i-Taus* may indeed be an actual relic of Babylonian or Assyrian art. "More interesting to anthropologists than these speculations about origins will be, perhaps, the recurrence of the same figure among the Tachtadji in Lykia, a phenomenon to which writers on the Yezidi do not refer..."

The beliefs of the Yezidis concerning the peacock are shared by Muslims elsewhere in the world with slight variations. The Arabs believe that the *Malik-i-Taus* symbolise the sun god supported by the universal axis. A Javanese Muhammedan myth, on the other hand, tells us that the peacock is the guardian at the gate of Paradise and ate the devil, thus conveying him within it. The Muhammedans of Malaysia believe that the peacock guided the serpent to the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, and hence it is under an eternal curse.

An Arabic manuscript entitled *Mitabul-Jamharah fi 'ilmi'l-Bazyarah* (Asiatic Society of Bengal. No. 865) tells us that there is a tradition that once the Prophet said: "The metamorphosed beings in the world are seven hundred, and these rebelled against the vicars of the Prophet after the death of the latter. Four hundred of them took to the land and three hundred to the sea. . . . We made them the subject of stories and we scattered them utterly. The metamorphosed beings that people can see and have seen are nineteen. These are, the elephant. . . and the



11.

**A BRONZE PEACOCK**  
(Indian Museum, Photo : Radhakanta Paul)



peacock (according to some)". The unknown author of this manuscript heard from Sulayman Ibn Ja'far Al-Ja-fari: "I once heard Al-Hasan (Peace be on him) saying: 'The peacock is a metamorphosed bird and was formerly a handsome man who enticed the wife of a Believer, and seduced her, and then sent her away; so God on High changed him into a pair of peafowl, male and female'—and Praise be to God the Lord of the Universe".

Christianity adopted the peacock in its symbolism as the emblem of resurrection on account of the annual renewal of its feathers after moulting and the belief in the incorruptibility of its flesh. The bird appears very commonly in Christian iconography. This bird in Christian art is an emblem of the ever-vigilant church, for it is an attribute of Christ and Saint Barbara. Furthermore, the bird symbolised the grace of sacrament and heavenly glory. For this reason, the bird was carved on the tombs of the apotheosized, and on funeral lamps to signify the ascension of the sanctified soul in its union with God. Figurines of peacocks are found in Christian churches in India and abroad. The Cathedral of St. Mark in Venice has a beautiful and graceful carving of a peacock. The peacock feeding on grapes was the symbol of the Christian eucharist. The bird with olive leaf, similarly, symbolised the Christian church bringing peace. The peacock with a dragon meant sky and earth and carried the same symbolism as bird and serpent—winged serpent. The peacock was also the symbol of the Supreme Father and as such was embroidered on the vestments of Catholic ecclesiastics.

The concept of the immortality of the soul in the figure of the peacock was borrowed by Christians from the Romans.

The peacock feathers in India and China are considered sacred and auspicious, but it is, since the 15th or 16th century, an emblem of Evil Eye among the English-speaking world. The peacock, Juno's own bird, full of eyes, symbolise the most envious and ill-natured of the deities and it is held as a potent mischief-maker in European lore. Even well-educated Englishmen are reported to be shocked at the sight of the peacock's feathers being put up as ornaments. The English people believe that death or at least some evil will happen if the feathers are brought home. The export of peacock's feathers from India

for ornamental purposes to Europe during the Middle Ages suffered a setback on account of this superstition.

In China, the peacock is known as *K'ung Chueh* (large sparrow) and is also called *Kung Ch'iao* (Confucian bird). It is regarded as the symbol of the spirit of fire, for which, as well as for its beauty and rarity, is highly prized. It has been introduced into the Flowery Kingdom from adjacent countries, for, according to a history of the T'ang dynasty, "many thousand districts paid tribute in peacocks, their feathers being required by the State, not only as decoration for the Imperial processions, but also for the designation of official rank".

Though not a native of China, the peacock has, thus, found a place in the history of China from time immemorial. It is an emblem of beauty and dignity among the Chinese. The use of the handsome tail feathers to designate official rank was commenced in the Ming dynasty, and ceased with the dawn of the Republican Era (1918). There are many legends in the ancient Chinese writings pertaining to the peacock's love of music, its habit of dancing, and its vanity. The peacock does not appear in painting until the T'ang dynasty. Empress Tao, daughter of Tou I—a military commander (A.D. 562) and founder of the T'ang dynasty—was a beautiful girl. Tradition relates that her father, observing her beauty and ability, concluded that she should be given in marriage to an exceptional husband. He therefore consulted her regarding her own wishes. It appears that her favourite occupation was embroidering peacocks on screens; so it was decided by her father that she would marry the man who would succeed in shooting the eyes from one of her peacocks. Many were the suitors who vainly made the effort. The first emperor of the T'ang dynasty, Kao-tsu, succeeded in putting out both the eyes of the bird with his shots, and was declared the successful suitor. From that time onwards, when the selection of a son-in-law is being considered, the one chosen is spoken of as "The right man for the peacock screen".

*Kujaku* is the name by which the peacock is known in Japan. The first mention of it occurs in the *Nihongi*, a seventh century treatise, where it is related that in the fifth year of the reign of Suiko, a foreign prince came to the court to pay a friendly visit

and brought a gift of a peacock and a parrot. Then, at a much later period, a pair of peacocks, which had been sent as a New Year's gift to the Prince of Hizen, was the source of the following amusing incident: It appears that, as the guests of the day were admiring the birds, they were asked to divine the sex of the most beautiful of the two. The gentlemen, glancing at the gaily arrayed ladies who were present, replied, "The hen"; but when the ladies were questioned—following the modesty characteristic of Japan's women—they answered, "The cock". To the latter, the Prince bowing low, replied, "Quite right! Nature herself will ever have the male best clad, and it seems singular that a wife should wish to be more beautifully clothed than her husband".

The most ancient example of painting connected with the peacock in Japan is that of the representation of the Buddhist healing deity, *Kujaku Myo-o*, the Japanese counterpart of the Hindu deification of the fowl. The reason for this exaltation of the fowl is accounted for as follows: "A priest, appealing to the Buddha for relief from the bite of a cobra, was told that the worship of Mayuri Vidyaraja would render the devotee immune from the poisonous effects of such a bite, since the peacock fed upon venomous reptiles. Since that occurrence, this god has ever been invoked, not only for protection from serpents, but from every kind of calamity". One of the five manifestations of Kukuzo, the counterpart of the Hindu Akasagarbha or god of wisdom, uses the peacock as his vehicle in Japan.

The seeing of a peacock in dream is interpreted as the unfolding realisation of wholeness, because of the appearance of all the colours in its feathers and the circular shape of its fanned-out tail. It also signifies rebirth and resurrection, dying in order to live. The folded tail of a peacock in dreams signified remorse.

Pavolatri, originally confined to India, spread to the nearby lands in Asia and Europe and the bird today is part and parcel of the major religious systems of the world—Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. India can legitimately feel proud of adopting the peacock as her National Bird and contributing its cult to the cultural enhancement of Asia and Europe.

### PEACOCK'S PLACE IN HISTORY

The peacock was one of the precious commodities that found its way to the Holy Land from Muziris, modern Cranganore (Kodungallur) of Kerala. The Bible mentions that King Solomon (c. 950 B.C.) imported the gorgeous peafowl into the Holy Land through Judea and they wandered about the grounds of his great temple. He raised a whole drove of them. This beautiful bird had reached Athens by 450 B.C. and was kept in the island of Samos earlier still.

The peacock was, no doubt, introduced to the Holy Land by the Phoenicians who were the masters of the Arabian and Indian Oceans and whose privilege it was to trade with Muziris. They introduced it to the Pharaohs of Egypt and kings of Asia Minor, who kept them in their gardens. The Hebrews kept these birds in captivity. In Greece the peacock was associated with Hera and was kept in her temple.

Aristophanese, Aristotle, Pliny and other ancient writers have paid glowing tributes to the peacock. The credit for popularising the Indian peacock in the West must go to Alexander the Great. When the tide of history turned against the ambitious conqueror and he had to abandon his dream of an Indian Empire, it is said he wanted to take back with him some imperishable tokens of his Indian adventure. Many things came to his mind and his booty was large and fabulous. He remembered the peacocks of his reconciliation feast and ordered that two hundred of them should be captured and transported to Europe alive. Claudius Aelianus tells us that Alexander, struck with admiration of the beauty of the bird, had proclaimed the severest penalties against any one who should kill it. The price of a pair (cock and hen) in the days of Aelianus was a thousand drachmas (or about £ 40). It is not on record whether the two hundred peacocks taken home by the Macedonian ever reached his capital. From Greece these birds were carried to Rome and the palaces of the Caesars. The Romans used the peacock for ornamental purposes.

The peacock has played a significant role in the history of India. The Mauryas and Imperial Guptas, who spread Indian Culture to different lands, were indebted to this bird for their glory. The ancestors of the Mauryas were probably having the

peacock (*Mor*) as their totem. The Bhanja family of Orissa was an offshoot of the Maurya dynasty to which Chandragupta and Asoka belonged. According to tradition another line of Maurya kings having the peacock as its emblem was ruling over Tamralipti (modern Tamluk of West Bengal). It was for this reason that the emblem of the chief of Mayurbhanj was a peafowl, and that the killing of the bird was prohibited in his principality. The Bhanja kings had their standard with the peacock.

The Moguls in India glorified the peacock. Allah, it is believed, first of all created a tree with a thousand branches and on it he placed the Prophet in the form of a peacock. He placed before him the bird in which his image was reflected and when he saw his own loveliness he could not help shedding tears of delight. Out of these tears Allah created the universe. Perhaps this belief accounts for the ornamentation of Akbar's tomb with the figure of the peacock standing on a vase with its feathers outstretched on the east gate of the monument. Above this peacock could be seen the ornamental decoration in symmetrical form of two more peacocks (with closed tapestry) standing face to face.

The peacock is well represented on the coins issued by various rulers of India. From about 600 B.C. the punch-marked coins of India bear, among other symbols, a figure of a peacock on five-arched hills. Credit should go to Asoka the Great for selecting the peacock as our National Bird and honouring it on his coins. "It may be pointed out here that the hollow-cross symbol is not seen on the silver punched coins; probably it was not used on the silver coins of Asoka, but a peacock takes its place with the hill-and-crescent figure". Carlyle noticed the figure of a peacock engraved on the Asokan pillar of Lauriya Nandangarh, which he took to be the royal mark of Asoka.

The Yaudheyas (3rd-4th century A.D.), who regarded Skanda-Kartikaya as their guardian deity, issued coins with the peacock on the left of their god. The Kushanas were also the votaries of the peacock and issued a number of their coins with this bird. The peacock is prominent in the Gupta gold coins of (1) Horseman, (2) Peacock, (3) Combatant Lion, and (4) Elephant-rider and Lion-slayer types. The Imperial Guptas and Later Guptas issued a large number of silver coins with the pea-



cock motif. These silver coins were essentially meant for provincial circulation. "Winged Peacock" and "Fan-tail" Peacock" are the two important types of coins that have come down to us. Some of the provincial copper coins of Vijayanagar rulers also featured the peacock on the obverse. The Kalabras of South India also issued coins with a single peacock feather.

The peacock does not find favour with the Sultanate and Mogul periods of Indian History in the realm of numismatics. During the Maratha supremacy and the British ascendancy the bird was seldom used in coinage. However, Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab, issued a gold coin bearing the figure of a she-peacock (*Moran*) in 1803. These coins were known as Mora Shahi rupees amongst the bankers. Though the bird has not been honoured in coinage after its declaration as the National Bird, nevertheless, it finds its place in the Ten-rupee currency notes currently in circulation.

The history of the Peacock Throne of Shah Jahan is well known. This fabulous throne of classical workmanship in the world of art, cost the imperial exchequer four crores of rupees, if we are to believe Bernier. He estimated the cost at forty millions of rupees or sixty millions of pounds (*livres*) or thereabouts. It took seven years for the construction of the Peacock Throne. The Peacock Throne remained in India until 1739 when Nadir Shah's hordes overran northern India and sacked the capital. He took it away with him with other spoils to Persia. When Nadir Shah was murdered and his camp plundered, the Peacock Throne and the Tent of Pearls fell into the hands of Khurds. They divided the precious heritage amongst themselves. It is believed that the original Peacock Throne escaped the insurrection that swept Persia after Nadir Shah's death. The throne, finally, fell into the hands of the British and they sent it to England by the ship *Grosvenor* which sailed from Bombay in the first week of August, 1782. The ship ran into heavy weather and on Sunday the 4th August, 1782, foundered near the rocky coast of East Africa. The Peacock Throne is thus believed to be at the bottom of the Indian Ocean. Several attempts have been made to retrieve the treasure, but in vain.

The Peacock Throne of the Shah of Iran is a different historical treasure which has its own tale to tell. It is not the same

fabulous Peacock Throne of Shah Jahan. It was built by the Persian Emperor Agha Muhammad Shah and is a much inferior version worked out in Persian style.

### CONCLUSION

Bird of refulgent tints, whose beauty charms  
The eye of all beholders ! Dazzling bright  
Thy lovely plumage, spreading to the Sun;  
Most striking of the living objects known !

The Peacock, the National Bird of India, is the most beautiful creature of Nature. The Indian National Bird is an original inhabitant of South India. Its deification and worship as Mother Earth and Skanda-Kartikeya is nowhere else more pronounced than in the home of the Dravidians. The worship of the Peacock is very ancient and the Indus Valley Civilisation bears ample testimony to its cult. There has been a scramble for taking the peacock as their vehicle by various gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. Kartikeya and his brother Ganesa claimed the bird as their vehicle. Saraswati, their sister, too claims it as her *vahana*. Kumari, the consort of Skanda-Kartikeya, has this bird as her mount. Parvati, their mother, had assumed the form of the peacock on more occasions than one. Lord Siva, one of the triads of Hindu trinity, is intimately connected with the Peacock through his family members. Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Hindu high god Vishnu, was fond of peacock feathers. There is profound veneration for the Peacock among the Buddhists and Jains. *Malik-i-Taus* is worshipped by the Muslims all over the world. The symbolic significance of the bird in Christian and Islamic art is very much pronounced. The Peacock was sacred to the Greeks and the Romans. This bird has secured an honoured place in the life and culture of the Chinese and the Japanese. The fine arts of both these nations are embellished with the peacock motif.

The peacock has played a very important role in India's cultural conquest of South-East Asia. The bird has endeared itself to the hearts of millions of people all over the world. Credit should go to Aesop for spreading the message of this bird the world over through his fables which have swayed young minds for the past 2,500 years. The folklore of the Russians

and other nations also bear ample testimony to the popularity of this bird. The presence of the peacock feathers in the burial is a conclusive proof that the Vikings in America had used them for secular, if not sacred, purposes at least eight centuries ago. The peacock has thus travelled abroad as India's cultural ambassador from time immemorial before the dawn of Diplomacy and continue to do so even today.

There is no other bird in India which can be considered as the symbol of this ancient land's cultural traditions in an unbroken sequence. It has integrated the North and South, East and West. Though a native of the land of Dravidians, it has been used by the Aryans as a tool in forging a link with the far South, by adopting it into their fold and giving it a place in their scriptures. But for this bird, the Aryan cultural conquest of the Dravidian lands would have remained incomplete.

Since the peacock is the enemy of serpents, it is the symbol of victory of truth and justice over falsehood and malice, and it amply justifies our national legend, *Satyam eva Jayate*. The declaration of the Peacock as our National Bird has only revived a glorious past. The Lion Capital of Asoka's Pillar is our National Emblem; so is today the Peacock, whom the great emperor honoured as the National Bird of India. The peacock is not a mere bird to the people of India, but the perfect symbol of Indian Culture.









